

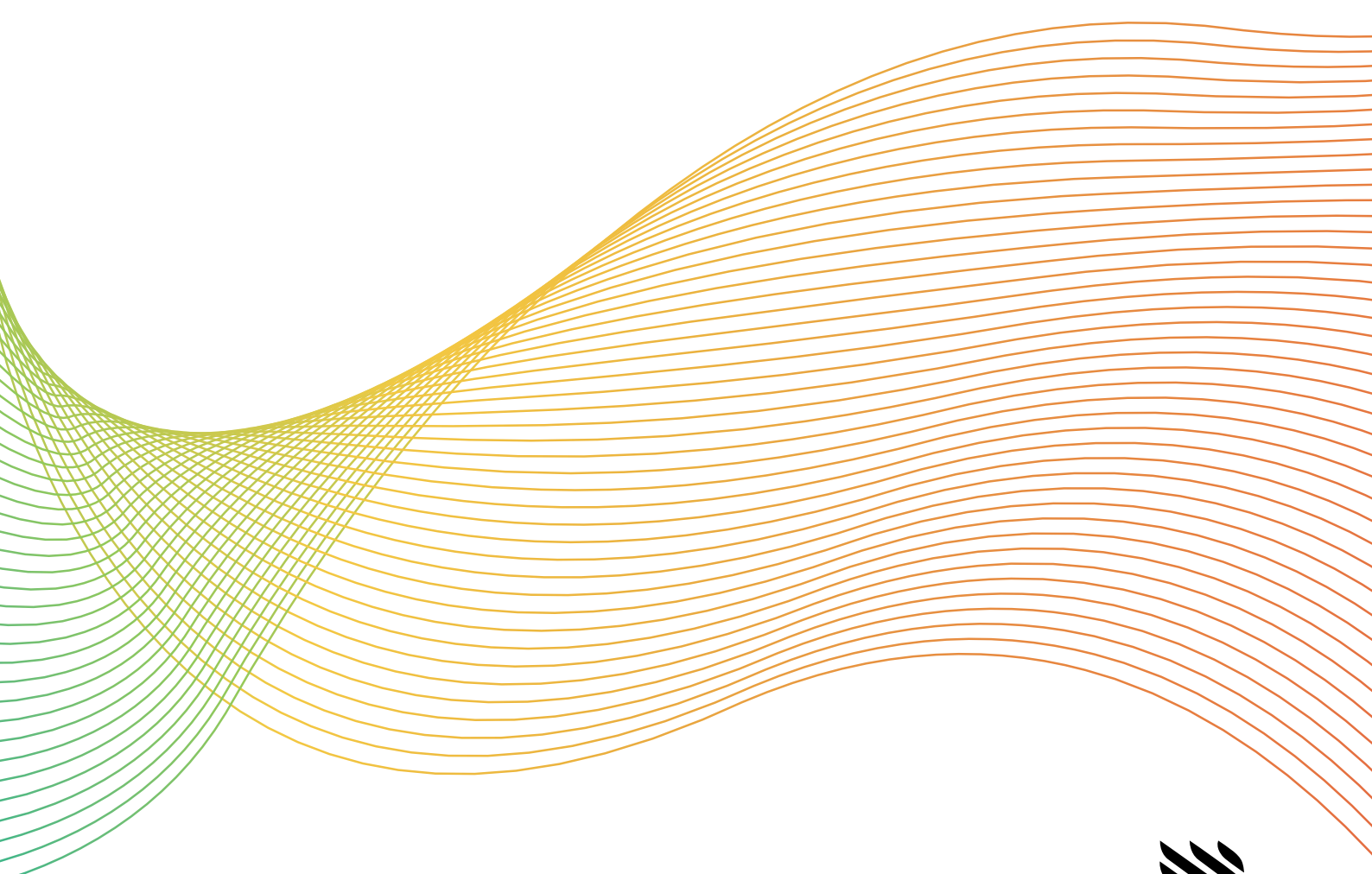
NZ On Air



AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

1989-2011 / PAUL NORRIS AND BRIAN PAULING

A research report for NZ On Air March 2012



FOREWORD

For two decades now, diversity has been NZ On Air's mantra. We assess what the broadcast sector can provide commercially, then add content and services to broaden the menu.

When Paul Norris and Brian Pauling approached us with their proposal to conduct a study of NZ On Air and its work over two decades, we saw this as an opportunity to create a document that would provide a valuable record and combine history with critical evaluation. The two authors have a notable reputation in the research field.

Now that the authors have finished rummaging through the archives, you can read the result. They present the story of the creation and development of a Crown entity given a simple, clear mandate: to ensure New Zealand stories, songs and perspectives are not crowded out of a media landscape where excellent foreign content is easily and cheaply acquired.

No single person will like everything we support, but it's pretty difficult not to find something to appeal. From *Shortland Street* to *Nothing Trivial, Outrageous Fortune* and *Bliss*; *Country Calendar* to *Inside New Zealand* to *Praise Be*; *What Now?* to *Tagata Pasifika* to *What's Really In Our Food?*; *The New Zealand Wars* to *Q+A* and *The Nation*; from Radio New Zealand to small community access radio stations; access services for hearing and visually impaired audiences; music from pop anthems to classical recordings; website NZ On Screen to online drama *Reservoir Hill* – the common thread is that all have been nurtured to serve New Zealanders of all shapes and sizes.

The authors were free to range where they liked and to form their own views. As with all such studies, not everything can be covered and we hope that further studies will be undertaken over time. Meantime we thank the authors for their interest in broadcasting policy and practice, the interviewees for sharing their experiences and of course former and current Board members and staff of the agency.

The study confirms that broadcasters, content creators and NZ On Air personnel have all played an important part in ensuring that New Zealanders have access to quality content for and about themselves. We thank all who have been involved.



Neil Walter
Chair

NZ On Air
December 2011



Jane Wrightson
Chief Executive

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AUTHORS' NOTE

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Most of this report has been written by Paul Norris and Dr Brian Pauling. Two specialists were commissioned to contribute the genre chapters on drama and comedy, and children's programmes. The chapter on drama and comedy was written by Dr Trisha Dunleavy, from Victoria University, an acknowledged expert who has written extensively in this field. The chapter on children's was written by Dr Ruth Zanker, from the Broadcasting School at CPIT, also an acknowledged expert and prolific contributor in her field. She was a founder member of the Children's Television Foundation, and she has advised NZ On Air on children's programme issues at various stages.

Dr Pauling has written the chapters on Radio, Music and Archiving, and the radio section of Remote Coverage. He has been a consultant to NZ On Air on archiving matters at various times.

The remaining chapters have been written by Paul Norris, who was also the overall editor of the project. During his time as an executive at TVNZ, he was responsible for dealing with NZ On Air on remote coverage issues. He has also been an occasional consultant to NZ On Air.

All the writers have tried to be as accurate as possible, acknowledging the scope of this study and the large amount of documentation available. Wherever possible they have supported their arguments with evidence. Any opinions expressed are entirely their own.

At the end of this report we have added NZ On Air's own summary of the history of the first twenty years, published in the Annual Report in 2009.

The authors are grateful to Christine Westwood and Anita Roberts of NZ On Air for their assistance in tracking down a number of documents. They would also like to thank two colleagues at CPIT, Karen Thomas who did the graphs, and Christina Evans who masterminded the format of the document. Finally they acknowledge the work of Rebecca Mudgway and David Hughes of Audience Graphic Design Limited in the creation of the hard copy version.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS NZ ON AIR?

NZ On Air is a remarkable institution. Created as one of the elements of the broadcasting reforms of the late eighties, it has survived through a number of changes of government and shifts in broadcasting policy. It is essentially a funding body, a mechanism for allocating public money for a range of broadcasting activities. Its most distinctive feature is a contestable fund for television programmes, open to all free-to-air broadcasters. This feature is unique in the world, attracting international attention and critical study from many overseas broadcasters and policy makers.

Although it was conceived as an institution for the delivery of public broadcasting, it soon became clear that its focus was to be on nurturing New Zealand's cultural identity through the funding of local content, a phrase meaning programme content of New Zealand stories and issues, made by New Zealanders. It is evident that NZ On Air has been responsible for funding, and indeed inspiring, a great many programmes that would not have been made in a fully commercial environment. New Zealand's enduringly popular soap *Shortland Street* was inspired by NZ On Air. Funding and support have enabled such drama successes as *Outrageous Fortune* and comedy such as *bro'Town*. Hundreds of documentaries have been funded, along with various series of children's programmes including the long-standing *What Now?*. There has also been strong support for programmes for Maori, Pacific peoples and minorities.

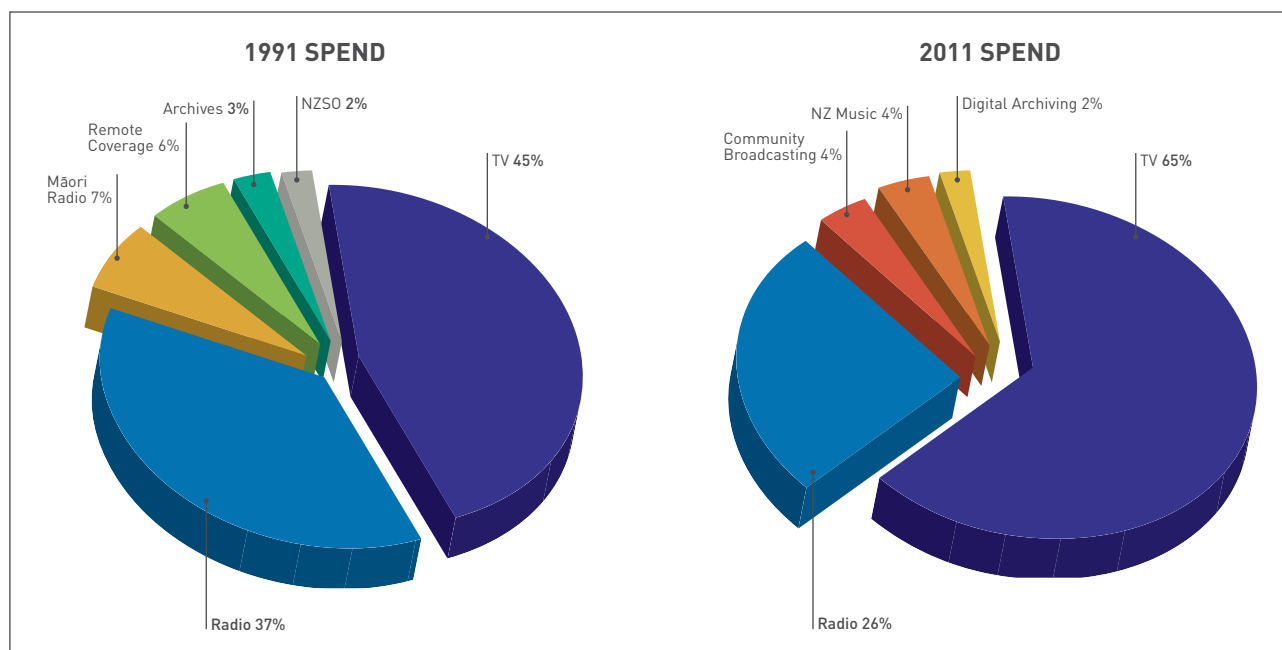
But the promotion of local content is not confined to television. It extends to radio and to the music scene. Indeed NZ On Air has been responsible for a diverse range of activities, many of which fall loosely under the banner of public broadcasting.

RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

- The contestable fund for television programmes
- Funding public radio – Radio New Zealand National and Radio New Zealand Concert
- Funding a small number of programmes for commercial radio
- Funding access radio stations
- Funding support for both television and sound archives
- Funding selected online projects, including the website NZ On Screen
- Funding transmission coverage for remote areas, both radio and television

These activities have varied over the period of NZ On Air's existence as illustrated in the following graphs.

FIG 1 RANGE OF ACTIVITIES 1991 COMPARED TO 2011



Source: NZ On Air Annual Reports 1990/1991 and 2010/2011

Notes to the above:

- At the start, NZ On Air had transitional responsibility for the Symphony Orchestra (NZSO), an institution originally supported by the Public Broadcasting Fee.
- Responsibility for Maori radio was passed to Te Mangai Paho in 1995 (see Chapter 4).
- Responsibility for remote transmission coverage moved to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage in 2003.
- Responsibility for television archiving moved to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage from July 2011.
- Support for access and community broadcasting developed over the period, as did the promotion of NZ music.
- Note the change in the proportions spent on television and radio.

THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY

In the fast-moving world of broadcasting, surely any institution that can survive 22 years remaining faithful to its original intentions is worthy of a critical study. For NZ On Air essentially represents the public broadcasting dimension in our mixed media landscape, and it is useful to question how well it fulfils this role, whether improvements can be made, and how it might adapt to future developments.

This study will attempt to chart the ebbs and flows of NZ On Air's approach to its role and its responsibilities. It will cast light on the tensions between the institution and the broadcasters and the ensuing personality clashes. It will reveal how NZ On Air felt that its very existence was threatened at one point in its history and how it dealt with that threat. It will also record how disillusioned several of the Chairs of the institution became, in that they felt unable to deliver on their responsibilities in the way they wished to.

But above all this is an evaluative study. It will seek to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of this model of intervention in the commercial mediascape for public purposes. In what areas has NZ On Air been most effective and what has worked less well? How well has the model, and the institution, adapted to developments over its 22 year history? It is hoped that the answers to these fundamental questions may be helpful not just to those working for NZ On Air, but also to broadcasters, politicians and policy-makers. The study may also remind listeners and viewers of the ways in which NZ On Air has enriched their lives and indeed our culture overall.

METHODOLOGY

The authors have had full access to all agendas and minutes of the meetings of the Board of NZ On Air, also all the reports and publications of the institution. They have also accessed some research sources elsewhere, such as Archives NZ. To assist in their understanding and interpretation of events and issues, the authors have conducted interviews with a number of individuals who have played significant roles in the evolution of NZ On Air – Chairs of the Board, Board members, NZ On Air staff, Ministers of Broadcasting, and industry practitioners (see Appendix).

CHAPTER 2

ENVIRONMENT AND ORIGINS

THE MEDIASCAPE IN THE MID-EIGHTIES

The media landscape in New Zealand in the mid-eighties was very different from that in 2011. Television consisted of merely two channels, both state-owned and run by the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ), a statutory corporation. Viewers paid a licence fee of \$71.50, all of which went to the BCNZ, who were also responsible for running 34 radio stations, both non-commercial and commercial, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. While the BCNZ may have owed its original inspiration to the BBC model, the fundamental difference was that in New Zealand, television has always been commercial. Both TV channels took advertisements from their inception (the first channel began in 1960, the second in 1975), with the proportion of revenue from commercials steadily increasing over the years. By 1984, around 85% of the BCNZ's revenue was commercial.

Thus the seeds of an enduring tension were sown early on. The BCNZ was a public broadcaster and required under its governing legislation (the Broadcasting Act 1976) to meet the Government's social objectives in broadcasting. Yet it had become obliged to operate as a commercial organisation to a greater and greater extent. Politicians were reluctant to take the publicly unpopular step of increasing the licence fee, preferring to accept a greater reliance on commercial self-funding. In the early days of television advertising was restricted to certain days of the week. But the advertising-free days steadily disappeared, until by the late eighties only Sunday morning was left.

Broadcasting operated in a highly regulated environment. Entry into the broadcasting market was closely controlled by the quasi-judicial Broadcasting Tribunal. Licences for radio stations were issued in accordance with explicit government policy, which required the Tribunal to take account of the impact on existing broadcasters of any new services. Hearings were long, arduous and expensive. Licences for television frequencies could only be issued with the express permission of the Minister of Broadcasting.

Enter the Labour Government of 1984, committed to freeing up the economy from the straitjacket of controls under the previous National government of Robert Muldoon. The new Labour government, encouraged by a group of reformist Treasury officials, set about implementing a series of measures loosely categorised as following the principles of the free market – measures designed to stimulate fuller and fairer competition and to end a regime of subsidies which had protected local industries up to this time, notably the farming sector.

DEREGULATION OF BROADCASTING

Labour won a second term in 1987 and by 1988 it was the turn of broadcasting to feel the heat of reform. The Minister of Broadcasting described the Government's plan as "the most far-reaching restructuring and deregulation of broadcasting not only in this country but anywhere in the world" (Richard Prebble, quoted in Day, 2000: 367).

The guiding principles of the plan were to increase competition and consumer choice and to separate clearly the commercial from the non-commercial.

The deregulation package had three main components:

OPENING UP THE AIRWAVES

The airwaves were to be opened up to competition. Broadcasting frequencies were to be auctioned off to the highest bidder and could be traded. The Broadcasting Tribunal was abolished. Effectively any broadcaster willing to pay the market price for a licence could enter the industry. This included broadcasters who wished to use new delivery mechanisms like satellite or cable and those keen to introduce pay television services. There were no programming requirements or conditions attached to the new broadcasting licences. These changes were put in place in the Radiocommunications Act 1989.

In television the first steps towards competition had been taken several years earlier, with the decision to award a licence for a third television channel. It was the lengthy process of hearings under the Broadcasting Tribunal which had convinced some Labour politicians of the urgent need for change. TV3 won the licence in 1987, but by the time they were ready to go to air in 1989, deregulation had dissolved the system in which they had been conceived and consequently they faced a tougher, more competitive environment.

TVNZ AND RNZ BECOME SOES

The BCNZ was restructured into two separate State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Television New Zealand Ltd (TVNZ), and Radio New Zealand Ltd (RNZ). SOEs were to be run as commercial businesses, with profits as the primary objective, and the return of a dividend to the Treasury. This change meant that TVNZ had no programming requirements stipulated in legislation. Even the broad Reithian objective – that broadcasting should inform, educate and entertain – was dropped from the new Broadcasting Act, despite the phrase being specifically included in the agreed social objectives.

THE SEPARATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The social objectives of broadcasting, described as public service objectives, were to be separated clearly from commercial objectives. The two key public service objectives, as agreed by the Labour Cabinet in April 1988, were:

- To reflect and develop the New Zealand identity and culture by obtaining, commissioning and broadcasting a range of programmes to inform, educate and entertain
- To ensure that the people of New Zealand have access to television and radio broadcasting services offering a range of programmes which will cater in a balanced way for varied interests of different sections of the community

Cabinet Minute 1988

The social objectives were to be met through a system of publicly funded grants to be administered through a Broadcasting Commission, for which broadcasters would bid competitively – a new way of distributing the income from the licence fee. It was this Broadcasting Commission that was to be re-named NZ On Air within a year of its coming into being.

OTHER CHANGES

Restrictions on foreign ownership in broadcasting were relaxed and later (1991) abolished altogether. But there was to be no letting go of controls on broadcasting standards. A new authority, the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) was established to handle complaints from the public and monitor standards.

Consideration was given to the introduction of quotas for New Zealand programmes (local content), but in the end even proposals for a voluntary quota did not proceed, except for NZ music content on commercial radio.

ORIGINS OF THE NZ ON AIR MODEL

It is not clear where the notion of a Broadcasting Commission originated, or its most distinctive feature, the contestable fund for television programmes. Certainly the phrase Broadcasting Commission appears in the key Cabinet Minute, as does the principle of contestability. It seems most likely to have emanated from the ongoing work of officials and consultants.

What is clear is that the core argument for a separate body to administer public funding to achieve the social objectives in broadcasting came from economic theorists in the Treasury. Early hints can be seen in the Treasury submission to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting in 1985. The concept of public broadcasting was considered under the heading of tax funded broadcasting, with the conclusion that:

It was unnecessary for the Government to operate publicly owned and operated stations to achieve the objectives, and that, in the interests of efficiency, it would be preferable for the Government, perhaps through delegated bodies, to use funds from general taxation to buy non-commercial programmes for transmission by commercial broadcasting.

Treasury 1985: 44

In Treasury thinking, the concept of public broadcasting has been reduced to non-commercial programming, affirmed in another conclusion:

Non-commercial objectives should be removed from the BCNZ, being replaced, where the Government decides it to be necessary, by explicit contracts between the BCNZ and the Government for the undertaking of such activities.

Treasury 1985: 63

In line with the reference above to using funds from general taxation the Treasury also recommended that the licence fee be abolished, advice only taken much later, in 1999.

A second economic argument was the preference for distinction between the funding of a service and the providing of that service – the funder/provider split. It was felt that without such separation there was a tendency for “provider capture”, meaning it was often very difficult to know exactly what the providers were doing with funding if it was allocated to them directly.

One of the architects of the deregulation of broadcasting was Jim Stevenson, then an official in the Department of Trade and Industry. He chaired the report of the officials charged with implementing the Government’s reforms, and was to become a Board Member of the new Broadcasting Commission in 1990. He thought it wrong that all the public money should go to the one broadcaster. This was essentially because he believed there should be a level playing field between state-owned and private companies.

So if you applied this to broadcasting it was obvious that the public broadcasting fee, which did represent a lot of money at the time – about \$40m – that couldn’t just go to the state enterprise. If you had a social objective there was no inherent reason why other commercial players in the market place couldn’t utilise the public money and do just as good a job or at least contest that they could do just as good a job as a government enterprise and produce the social objective you were looking for.

Stevenson 2010

The Minister of Broadcasting, Richard Prebble, had reached a similar view, for reasons of efficiency.

It seemed odd to me that all the taxpayer money went to the state broadcaster. The state broadcaster appeared to use a great deal of the money on improving the signal – ensuring South Island mountain guides could hear the radio – rather than making programming. It seemed to me there would be a better return if private broadcasters also made “quality programming”. I also thought there were few criteria for evaluating how the taxpayers’ money was being spent.

Prebble 2010

Once the broad principles of the Government’s policy had been established, and signed off by Cabinet in April 1988, the Officials Committee was charged with working through the detail to be enshrined in a new Broadcasting Act. Unusually the Committee and its consultants from the UK, Booz Allen, consulted widely with broadcasters and the industry at large. Certainly the independent producers, such as they were at a time when TVNZ had substantial in-house production units in drama, documentary and children’s, had been campaigning for some years to have the broadcasting fee taken away from TVNZ and administered in a different way. The independents supported the idea of the allocation of public money programme by programme.

The officials concluded that there were a number of advantages of using a system of contestable grants:

- Competitive neutrality and greater competition between broadcasters. The state broadcaster need not be disadvantaged by the costs of carrying certain programmes which other broadcasters do not face
- Costs and benefits are readily identifiable (transparent)
- The clear targeting of assistance to particular social groups
- Flexibility in mechanisms for delivery of public service programmes
- Costs are kept down as it is a “top-up” system. Few programmes are completely non-commercial and advertising revenue where available can be topped up with grant funding.

Officials Report 1988: 16

THE BROADCASTING ACT 1989

The process of reform gathered pace. Following the Officials Report, and an accompanying report on the restructuring of the BCNZ, a new Broadcasting Act was passed in May 1989. It laid out the remit for the new Broadcasting Commission in Sections 36 to 39. Its key functions were:

- To reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture
- To promote programmes about New Zealand and New Zealand interests
- To promote Maori language and culture
- To ensure a range of broadcasts is available to provide for the interests of women, children, the disabled and minorities, including ethnic minorities (youth were added in 2001)

There were specific requirements in relation to the funding of television programmes, even down to specific genres. The Commission was required to:

- Promote a sustained commitment by broadcasters to programmes reflecting New Zealand identity and culture
- Ensure that reasonable provision is made for the funding of television drama and documentaries

Furthermore in pursuit of transparency and efficiency, criteria were laid down for assessing proposals to fund programmes. Among them the Commission had to have regard to:

- The level of contribution (funding or resources) from the applicant
- The potential size of the audience

The Act also required the Commission to extend the transmission coverage for both radio and television to remote areas, and to oversee the maintenance of programme archives.

CONCLUSION

So the die was cast for the beginning of a new era in New Zealand broadcasting, in which the Broadcasting Commission was to play a central and controversial role. Although the phrase “public service broadcasting” does not appear in the Broadcasting Act, it was clear that the Commission was to be the vehicle for the delivery of public service objectives in an otherwise commercial environment. But what the Act effectively does is to conflate the notion of public service broadcasting with that of the promotion of New Zealand programmes, or local content. The conventional connotations of public service broadcasting included “quality” programming – an elusive phrase - and a range of programming to serve the entire audience. Such connotations went beyond the nurturing of local content.

TVNZ, in becoming an SOE, had no programming requirements imposed on it in the legislation – it was obliged to follow the commercial imperative. This was seen by some as a weakness in the model, and indeed was to prompt later attempts at reform by the incoming Labour Government in 1999. It was also regarded as a political failure by one of the central figures at the time, Hugh Rennie, Chair of the BCNZ and of the Committee overseeing the restructuring of the BCNZ.

We thought we had a commitment out of Prebble that there would be some public service commitments written into the legislation (for TVNZ) but when the Bill reached Parliament, none were there.

Rennie 2010

From the start of television in the sixties, the Public Broadcasting Fee (PBF) had gone to the state broadcaster, the BCNZ or its predecessors. For the most part it had been absorbed into the company's finances, with few people having any idea as to what it had been spent on. It was not until 1987 that the BCNZ, in its Annual Report, provided any indication how the fee was spent.

To remove the fee from the state broadcaster and make most of it contestable, indeed available to the state broadcaster's new commercial competitor, was a most significant step. It is hardly surprising that the state broadcaster found this new concept hard to accept, expressed in a continuing view that this was the state broadcaster's money and that the Broadcasting Commission should simply hand it over. The idea that the Commission would allocate the money on a programme by programme basis, on the merits of specific programme applications, was to rub salt in the wound. This was to become a matter of considerable contention in the early years of the Commission.

CHAPTER 3

TELEVISION – THE TENSIONS OF THE EARLY YEARS

I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that TVNZ has set out to contain, restrain, marginalise and finally destroy the effectiveness of the Commission.

Harley 1990

When we didn't play the role, he (Julian Mounter) was furious and went back to the politicians and said you should get rid of these people.

Horrocks 2010

Indeed TVNZ seemed to get offside with the Commission from their first informal meeting, as Roger Horrocks remembers it:

They were very patronising, they treated us as a bunch of wallies that had been rounded up by the Government and they took us in to shake hands with Judy and Richard – they thought they could impress us and simply pat us on the head. They treated us as idiots, and they weren't interested in us having any ideas of our own. So from a PR point of view they handled it really badly, because they pissed us off.

Horrocks 2010

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

From the first dealings of the Commission it became apparent that there were serious differences of view between it and TVNZ, differences that were exacerbated by the personalities of the key antagonists.

Following the sacking of Richard Prebble by Prime Minister David Lange in November 1988, Jonathan Hunt regained his previous portfolio of Minister of Broadcasting. It was his task to appoint the Chair of the new Broadcasting Commission. He chose Merv Norrish, a retired civil servant and former diplomat. Norrish admitted to knowing little about broadcasting but understood that the Minister wanted a generalist who was accustomed to dealing with politicians.

The other members of the Board were lawyer Alan Galbraith, academic Roger Horrocks with a background in film and television, accountant Stuart Melville, academic and champion of the Maori language Merimeri Penfold, and educationalist Gay Sharlotte.

But the driving force of the Commission at this time was its first Executive Director Ruth Harley. She knew the world of television and that of TVNZ, having been a commissioning editor at the state broadcaster in the late eighties. She also had a knowledge of the arts and culture, having worked at the QE2 Arts Council. She described herself as a “cultural nationalist” keen to promote New Zealand culture to a wide audience.

At TVNZ she had worked under the Chief Executive Julian Mounter, an Englishman who was determined to make TVNZ an effective modern broadcaster and to compete vigorously against newcomer TV3. From the start he was at odds with Harley and the Commission over a number of key issues.

BULK FUNDING

It soon became clear that the Commission did have firm ideas of its own. Early on it rejected the idea of bulk funding for television programmes. TVNZ, in its submissions on the Broadcasting Bill, had argued the economic benefits of long term bulk contracts and programme strand contracts, as they provided economies of scale and the development and retention of skills. In a paper sent to the Committee on the Restructuring of Broadcasting, TVNZ suggested that it could produce 500 hours of non-commercial programmes for around \$15.5m, covering drama, children's programmes, Maori and information programmes (TVNZ 1988). The Commission was willing to bulk fund Radio New Zealand's two non-commercial stations, but determined on a different approach to television, where funding was to be on a programme by programme basis. There was to be some funding of programme strands in documentary, but the Commission had to agree the individual programmes within the strand.

MAINSTREAM v MINORITIES

TVNZ's proposal for the bulk funding of 500 hours revealed the crux of a fundamental philosophical divide. TVNZ believed that it was the Commission's role to fund only the non-commercial programming that would not be produced in a commercial environment. TVNZ did not see the Commission's role extending into mainstream programming in prime-time.

When it (the Broadcasting Commission) was announced I thought "ah, so we get on with the commercial bit and ballet, Maori programmes, specialist drama – everything that the broadcaster isn't going to make – will be funded by the Commission." We got some money out of them (for these types of programmes) but then we saw them putting money into (TV3) programmes which were highly commercial like the Billy T James Show, Black Beauty and 60 Minutes which were designed to hit our ratings.

Mounter, quoted in Spicer et al 1996: 136

For her part, Ruth Harley was adamant that if the Commission was to promote New Zealand culture, it must aim at the mass audience:

NZ On Air had the potential to intervene ... in favour of mass interest NZ cultural product. So I was very in tune with it being a mass interest, I was very ambitious for it to be mass interest, which is not to say I wasn't interested in minority interest projects as well, I was, but I wanted NZ content to be part of everybody's opportunity and part of everybody's basic consumption.

Harley 2010

She delivered her view publicly, unambiguously and without delay:

The challenge is not only to make programmes about New Zealanders and for New Zealanders, but to make programmes that they want to listen to or watch; programmes that appeal to a majority of our stakeholders.

Harley 1989

By stakeholders, she meant all licence payers, as the Commission derived all its income from the licence fee, known as the Public Broadcasting Fee. Her determination to fund both mainstream and minority programming was reflected in her summary in NZ On Air's first annual report:

...NZ On Air has part-funded quality prime time programmes to ensure a wide range of mainstream viewers are exposed to popular programmes about New Zealanders. Without funding from the Broadcasting Fee, fewer such programmes would be available for the enjoyment of New Zealand audiences.

NZ On Air 1989/1990: 4

TVNZ was concerned that if the Commission were funding mainstream programming there would not be enough money for a full range of minority or non-commercial programming. Under the SOE Act, in TVNZ's view, the company was not permitted to subsidise non-commercial programming from its commercial activities, so the responsibility for the non-commercial areas rested squarely on the Broadcasting Commission.

Given the wording in the Broadcasting Act that its remit was the promotion of New Zealand identity and culture, it is hardly surprising that the Commission's view prevailed. There was no sign of any backing down by the Executive Director or her Board.

Battle was well and truly joined when the Commission announced its first allocation of funding for television programmes in September 1989. In its applications TVNZ had argued that it needed \$35m per year to remove any cross-subsidies to non-commercial programmes from its commercial activities – a significant increase from the \$15m it had proposed for a bulk funding contract. For its first allocation, the Commission disbursed some \$14m, for programmes that included a comedy series and a teenage soap (which did not proceed) for TV3, as well as a number of minority programmes.

TVNZ was not happy at money going to what it saw as commercial programmes on its competitor TV3, as Mounter indicated in the quote above and in a media release following the Commission's announcement:

Public money should not be used to top up prime-time profits. If the Broadcasting Commission persists in its new policy of subsidising commercial drama, soap operas, and comedies, non-commercial programmes will disappear without trace....it is pointless to throw public money at our programmes or others that would be made anyway, through commercial pressures.

TVNZ 1989

Mounter also noted that the Commission had chosen not to fund regional programmes, minority sports coverage and religious programmes that TVNZ had put forward.

Some weeks later TVNZ announced that it was cancelling nine planned "public service programmes". These included eight that had been granted part-funding by the Commission. TVNZ had resubmitted these programmes making it clear it wanted full funding for them. When this was not forthcoming TVNZ blamed the Commission for the cancellation of the programmes.

The stark contrast between the views of TVNZ and the Commission as to the Commission's role was laid bare. TVNZ was coming from a traditional public service perspective, expecting the Commission to fund only a broad range of programmes loosely categorised as non-commercial public service or minority programmes. The Commission was focused on New Zealand culture and local content, which included some minority programmes but certainly extended to popular programmes in prime time.

Whether these latter programmes were "commercial" in the sense that they would have been made anyway, in the commercial environment, was a key issue leading to much argument over the years. But the Chair of the Commission, Merv Norrish, was clear in his rebuttal of TVNZ's position:

Essentially TVNZ wants New Zealanders' broadcasting fees to be spent on programmes most New Zealanders won't see. New Zealand culture belongs to us all. It is not the sole preserve of minority interest groups. It is too important to be relegated to Sunday morning slots and the like.

Norrish 1990

Reflecting on these disagreements in 2011, Julian Mounter had not resiled from the position he took. He believed that both public and private broadcasters should be required to make a certain number of programmes that the commercial imperative will not necessarily produce.

My argument was that if there was no ballet on television in NZ, for instance, how would a young child in a remote part of the country ever have a chance to see one or aspire to a career in dancing.

Mounter 2011

Money that could be used for such programming should not be consumed by commercial programming that he believed would be made anyway. He acknowledged the intensity of the arguments but denied any suggestion that TVNZ tried to "kill" NZ On Air.

THE COMMISSION BECOMES NZ ON AIR

By April 1990, almost a year after the Commission had come into being, it had determined on a change of name. This move was primarily an attempt to relate to its audience of fee-payers and to reflect the essence of its mission to promote New Zealand identity and culture. The change was intended to show the public what they were getting for their Broadcasting Fee. The Commission allocated \$1.8m for a publicity campaign, and it required the broadcasters to use its new imagery in the credits for programmes it had funded, in whole or in part.

This was to add fuel to the ever-smouldering embers of antagonism with TVNZ. The company believed that the funding agency's use of the label NZ On Air underplayed TVNZ's commitment to New Zealand culture, claiming that TVNZ was spending \$180m in 1990 in creating 300 hours of local content. TVNZ was concerned that viewers could be confused to the point of believing that NZ On Air could take all the credit for the promotion of New Zealand content.

Relations were further strained when NZ On Air placed an advertisement in the newspapers promoting one of the programmes it had funded, the *Billy T James* show on TV3. This infuriated TVNZ, with Mounter responding: "this is an outrageous use of public money and totally interfering in commercial competitiveness" (Mounter 1990).

NZ On Air even considered having to abandon the campaign altogether but after a series of testy meetings and exchanges, provoking Ruth Harley's comments in the quote that opens this chapter, a fragile peace was reached. The Broadcasting Commission was no more - NZ On Air was firmly established.

FUNDING POLICY

In its first year NZ On Air had \$77m to spend, this being income from the Broadcasting Fee, net of collection costs. The Minister of Broadcasting had managed to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to agree to an increase in the Fee from \$71.50 to \$110, with effect from 1 July 1989, to provide a more substantial income for the Commission and enable more to be spent on television. Of the \$77m, \$31m was spent on television programmes in the first year, slightly less than the total amount spent on radio.

It is not clear how the Commission decided on the allocation to the various genres within television. What is important is that NZ On Air was not funding the total budget for television programmes. It was part-funding, or providing a level of subsidy to support a programme that would not otherwise be made. It expected broadcasters to make a contribution. This ran counter to expectations at both TVNZ and TV3, as is evident from TVNZ's reaction described above to the Commission's first allocations. Funding proportions varied from genre to genre, with some programmes in the children's area being fully funded, and some in minority programmes – such programmes being off-peak and unlikely to generate much advertising income for the broadcaster.

NZ On Air, in its first Annual Report, seemed well-satisfied with its achievements. But during the year one board member had urged the agency to take "positive initiatives", highlighting what he saw as missing from the television area. Roger Horrocks described most of the documentary proposals as "very prosaic...bread and butter stuff". He wanted documentaries that were more adventurous and innovative. He also noted that most project applications were male-dominated, and that there were few programmes about ethnic groups apart from Maori and none for people with disabilities.

This raised the issue of how pro-active could NZ On Air be in attempting to carry out its mission. It had resolved that having regard to the audience for a programme (required under the Broadcasting Act) meant that no project could be funded unless a broadcaster was prepared to screen it. The broadcasters were the gatekeepers. But did this mean that the agency should be content with the range of applications that came to it from the broadcasters and independent producers? Should it be seeking partnerships with the broadcasters to develop programmes in certain areas? Perhaps it could spur competition between the broadcasters to come up with fresh ideas. The next few years were to see significant developments.

CHAPTER 4

TELEVISION – THE CRUSADE FOR LOCAL CONTENT

I will always remember the first time I was called into TVNZthey were questioning each member of NZ On Air to find out what they wanted to do and I said I have always wanted to see more New Zealand production, I have always wanted to see more documentaries, and I have always thought it would be great to have a New Zealand soap opera. And I remember their faces just fell. It was like I had said something absolutely obscene. I realised that actually we did have a different vision.

Horrocks 2010

THE ROAD TO *SHORTLAND STREET*

Shortland Street was the first of a number of examples where the inspiration came not from a broadcaster or a producer, but from NZ On Air itself. Both Ruth Harley and Roger Horrocks were pushing for a daily soap because they saw it would have an immediate impact on the audience, a prime example of what fee-payers were getting for their money. It would also create an employment base for the development of New Zealand artistic and technical talent.

I couldn't understand... how come we have never had a soap. Every country has something like a soap, and that function was being taken by Australian soaps. They (the broadcasters) were using Australian soaps which were much cheaper. But wouldn't it be marvellous to have our own soap which would then be a training ground for actors, directors, writers and so on. Rightly or wrongly that was our motivation.

Horrocks 2010

Ruth Harley was concerned that the soap should reach the younger audience.

It's essential that it feature and deal with young people's problems and issues....it should be directed to the same demographics as Neighbours. We want these 10-17 year olds to see something of themselves on New Zealand television.

Harley, quoted in Smith 1996: 115

It is perhaps ironic, in looking back more than twenty years later, that TV3 were the first to want to screen a soap. They had an application for a teenage soap accepted in the first allocation of funding in September 1989, being granted \$1.66m (50% of the budget). But TV3 got into financial difficulties, going into receivership in May 1990, and the project did not proceed.

NZ On Air then went into proactive mode. Members saw that the way to make progress was to initiate a tender for what was termed a long-running (daily) serial drama. But they had to warm up the networks. The plan was to provoke competition between TVNZ and TV3, in that neither organisation would wish to see a substantial sum of public money going to their rival.

Warming up TVNZ was something of a challenge, largely because Chief Executive Julian Mounter was so opposed to the idea of a New Zealand soap in principle. Not only did he see this as the wrong use of public money, he also doubted it could be done – there was no skill base of actors, writers, directors and technicians.

But within TVNZ at the time there were a number of senior executives who did agree with the idea of a soap and effectively conspired with NZ On Air to develop the project. These executives included programmer Bettina Hollings, drama producer Caterina de Nave and Don Reynolds, Head of Production.

Before deregulation most drama had been made in-house at TVNZ. But one of the consequences of the commercial approach engendered by deregulation was that TVNZ dismantled both its drama and documentary departments, choosing to rely on an embryonic independent sector to fill the gap. TVNZ formed a subsidiary company South Pacific Pictures (SPP) to take over drama production.

In responding to NZ On Air's call for tenders, the TVNZ team worked closely with SPP and with the Australian production company Grundys, responsible for the successful Australian soap *Neighbours* which ran on TV2. TV3 was developing its ideas in conjunction with production houses Isambard and Communicado and with the Australian company Crawfords.

The decision between the two projects was made by the NZ On Air Board in October 1991, taking into account an assessment from an Australian adviser. There were important differences between the two proposals – TVNZ’s was for 230 episodes of half-an-hour, seeking \$3m of the total annual budget of \$10m, with a cost per episode of \$43,000. TV3’s production was much shorter at 110 episodes, yet it sought a higher level of funding, \$3,695,000, with a cost per episode of just over \$45,000, and a much lower contribution coming from the broadcaster.

In the event *Shortland Street* prevailed, partly because producer Caterina de Nave put forward a list of potential issues and stories relevant to the 11 to 17 year olds that NZ On Air was concerned to reach. It is also worth noting that by the time of the last stages of the development of the proposal, Julian Mounter had resigned as TVNZ’s Chief Executive. His successor Brent Harman proved more willing to be led by the group of conspirators in the company, although he was mindful of the risk TVNZ was taking and understandably nervous when the programme launched with its first episode on 25 May 1992 in the 7pm slot on TV2.

SHORTLAND STREET: THE RECORD

The programme began with mixed reviews, and audience ratings deemed to be satisfactory to both TVNZ and NZ On Air – around 20-23% of the teenage audience. But ratings steadily declined in the following months to the point where TVNZ were considering cancelling the show, or at least moving it in the schedule. TVNZ had given NZ On Air a commitment that it would stay with it and indeed its tactic was to leave it on over the summer when traditionally such programmes would take a break. This proved a successful move, as Bettina Hollings recalls:

We tried different promotional activities but we also knew the one card we had left to play was to get the programme away from tough competition and we left it on over the summer.we left it on, and the ratings climbed and climbed. And that was the pivotal point really.

Hollings 2010

The funding of *Shortland Street* was a significant milestone in the evolution of NZ On Air. It showed how the funding agency could influence what programmes could be made, particularly if they worked closely with the broadcasters. It demonstrated the agency’s determination to fund programmes aimed at young New Zealanders, who up to this time had only minimal opportunities to see themselves on screen or to see stories to which they could relate.

It marked the first daily soap in the history of New Zealand television. Those critics who saw little merit in it would perhaps be surprised that it has survived almost 20 years and been sold to several countries. It has certainly proved a seeding ground for the training and development of many actors, directors, writers and crew.

TV3’s proposal, *Homeward Bound*, was not dismissed altogether. In December 1991 NZ On Air agreed to fund a revised application for 22 weekly programmes, with the agency contributing \$1.57m. But it did not rate well enough and ran for less than a year.

SHORTLAND STREET: CONTINUING FUNDING

There is no easy answer to the question how long should public money be used to support what appeared to be a commercially successful production. In October 1992 TVNZ put forward an application for a second and third series of the programme, seeking \$6.8m over two years. NZ On Air staff assessed the proposal and concluded that the programme was “doing well in both audience numbers and in attracting regular advertisers...*Shortland Street* is now self-sustaining”. The recommendation was that funding should be declined. However when it came to the television sub-committee, the view was that NZ On Air should contribute to a third of the cost of a second series. The Board agreed and committed \$2.5m for the second year.

NZ On Air continued to fund *Shortland Street*, for a third and fourth series, although at a diminishing level - \$2.25m for the third year and \$1.138.8m for the fourth. By 1994 it was agreed that TVNZ would bear the full cost of the programme. NZ On Air described the programme as an “outstanding success” with its target audience of 14-25 year olds, pulling an audience of 871,000 a night. NZ On Air hailed it as an important series, reflecting New Zealand’s social and cultural diversity and tackling issues relevant to its target audience.

So for NZ On Air the risk had paid off. *Shortland Street* had supported the fulfilment of their mission. They had inspired and facilitated an idea that had succeeded to the point where it no longer needed the buttress of public funding.

But there is no doubt that this was risky territory, to the point that some in NZ On Air believed that the agency’s very future was intricately entwined with that of *Shortland Street*. Roger Horrocks put it this way:

NZ On Air was rescued by the fact that Shortland Street was a success. Had Shortland Street not been a success I don’t think that NZ On Air would have survived or certainly it wouldn’t have had the chance to put up dramas.

Horrocks 2010

Perhaps the final word on *Shortland Street* should lie with the Broadcasting Minister of the day Maurice Williamson, who was obliged to deal with hostile comments from his colleagues in Parliament after the first episode, which included a nurse having sex in a broom cupboard:

There was just chaos in the House. Michael Laws got stuck into me about how we could fund such filth, and even (Prime Minister Jim) Bolger said to me are you worried about this Shortland Street? I said it is not for me as Minister to have a view about content.

Williamson 2010

The Minister was correct – the Broadcasting Act does maintain the independence of NZ On Air and precludes Ministers from interfering with programmes. However Ministers have been known to express their views to Board members and in the early years they had the power to issue Ministerial directives.

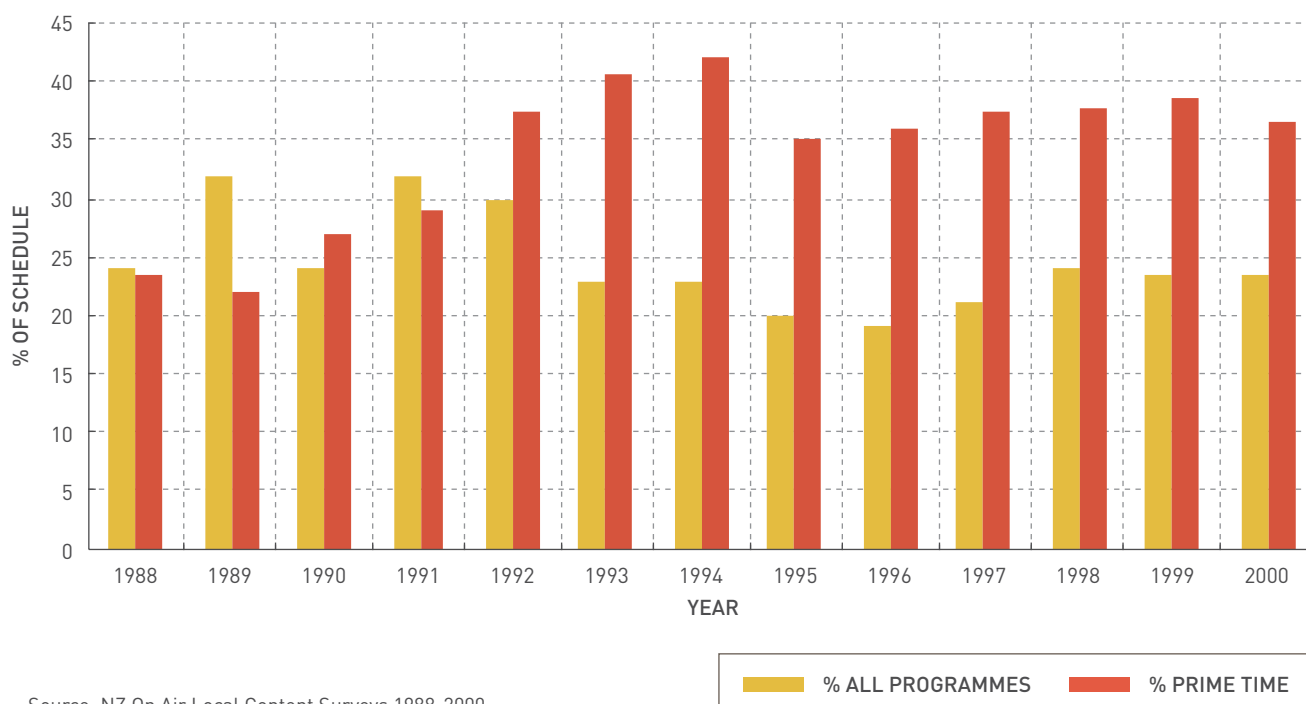
FUNDING PHILOSOPHY – THE DRIVE FOR LOCAL CONTENT

As can be seen in Chapter 3, NZ On Air made it clear from its first decisions and from its exchanges with the broadcasters, that its mission was the creation of more New Zealand programmes, under the banner of “local content”. New Zealand has always been faced with much lower levels of local content than most other countries, largely because the television companies could buy in programmes from international distributors for sums that were far lower than the cost of making such programmes here, for example drama or documentaries. What is more they were buying a proven product, rather than a pitch for a local programme that might or might not work.

NZ On Air resolved that it needed more information on how much local content was being screened here. As early as 1989, it commissioned a researcher to go through the programme schedules to find out and produce a document, now known as the *Local Content Survey*, that has been done on an annual basis ever since. The first survey revealed that in 1988 local content was 23.9% of total broadcast hours, rising to 31.8% in 1989. These were the last two years of TVNZ’s monopoly, immediately preceding the launch of TV3 in November 1989 and the impact of deregulation and NZ On Air.

It has to be said that the new era may have produced many more hours of New Zealand programmes, but because of the expansion of broadcast hours, the overall level of local content remained low. What is significant is that the level of local content in prime time rose markedly, to 42% in 1994. This can certainly be attributed to NZ On Air's concentration on funding mainstream programmes. Here is the pattern of the first decade of NZ On Air's presence.

FIG 2 LOCAL CONTENT AS PROPORTION OF THE SCHEDULE 1988-2000



Source: NZ On Air Local Content Surveys 1988-2000

It should be noted that NZ On Air's contribution is confined to certain genres. It has funded very few programmes in the genres responsible for the largest number of local content hours, namely news, current affairs and sport. Overall it funds or part-funds around 20% to 25% of total local content hours. Its impact is most clearly evident in the increased hours for drama/comedy, documentaries and children's programmes (see the chapters devoted to these genres).

Arguably NZ On Air has had the greatest impact when it has sought to improve the range and diversity of programmes and the quality of the programmes it chooses to fund. Much depends on its relationship with the broadcasters, given that the broadcasters are the gatekeepers and must agree to screen a programme before NZ On Air will fund it.

It was not long before the agency's first Chair was chivvying the broadcasters, in comments on the release of the Annual Report for 1991/2:

...we cannot achieve our goals on behalf of fee payers and according to our statute, without a substantial investment from the broadcasters.

Norrish 1992

This raises another important aspect of the way NZ On Air operates. In a limited number of cases it may fund a programme 100%. Examples are Maori programmes screened in the non-commercial period of Sunday mornings, or pre-school programmes where ads are not permitted. But most programmes are part-funded, with the broadcaster expected to provide a level of contribution (for more detail, see Chapter 7).

NEGOTIATION AND HORSE-TRADING

The level of broadcaster contribution was one of several areas in which NZ On Air found it essential to negotiate with the broadcasters. But perhaps the most important area was over the key questions of which programmes the broadcasters were prepared to screen, and which programmes NZ On Air wanted to see screened. There was often a mis-match between the agenda of the broadcasters and that of NZ On Air, requiring compromise and even a degree of horse-trading. These skills were one of the strengths of the first Executive Director of NZ On Air, Ruth Harley. Bettina Hollings remembers how she dealt with Canadian Gerry Noble, one of the early heads of TV3.

Ruth was a great trader, that is what I remember about her. She would waltz in and sayyou know what Gerry, I am going to fund your drama or your popular factual show, or whatever it is, but you know what you are going to do for me, you are going to put pre-school children's television on in the afternoons. It's off-peak, so you won't lose much revenue. And you are going to do that for me Gerry.

Hollings 2010

You and Me duly screened on TV3 from 1992. Indeed TV3 may have needed little persuading to run this programme, coming to appreciate that children's television was a way to draw in the wider audience.

Roger Horrocks believed that horse-trading was one of NZ On Air's primary tools.

I always found there were times when you could say – you desperately want X and we desperately want Y, perhaps we can do a deal.

Horrocks 2010

But it takes two to deal, and as the nineties advanced, the broadcasters seemed to become more commercially focused, and less inclined towards programmes delivering the social and cultural objectives that NZ On Air was keen to support. Underlying this trend were yet more moves to change the structure of broadcasting.

POLITICAL CHANGE – NATIONAL'S AGENDA

Despite the fact that the deregulated regime had only been in place for little over a year, the opposition National party was quick to criticise and to propose policy changes. In October 1990, National released its broadcasting policy for the forthcoming election, in a document that stated boldly that "the current set-up in television is simply not working... services have been introduced that simply cannot be supported by the funds available." It was not clear whether this referred to NZ On Air. In an attempt to complement commercialism with "the vital cultural balance in overall programming", TV One was to become a semi-commercial public broadcaster, with the possibility of TV2 being sold once financial viability had returned to the industry.

NZ On Air rightly saw a threat to its role and indeed to maintaining diversity of local content. Some part of the licence fee was to be used in the funding of a semi-commercial TV One. In a briefing document for the incoming Minister of Broadcasting, the agency pointed to the risks not just of reduced funding for programmes, but also of a level of cross subsidy of commercial activity on TV One.

In any event this policy seemed to evaporate once National settled into power. The National Minister of Broadcasting Maurice Williamson wanted to see a strict separation of commercial from public broadcasting. Although he achieved this in radio, with RNZ selling its commercial operation in 1995, he acknowledged that television was more problematic – the revenue loss from making TV One non-commercial or even semi-commercial would have been too great.

By 1996 National's policy had moved to focus on the sale of TVNZ, or at least TV2. This put NZ On Air on the defensive again. In a well-argued document produced in 1998, *New Zealand Television and the Future of Local Content*, the agency reiterated that if both channels were sold, the level of local content was unlikely to be maintained. There was a further risk that the diverse range of local content would not be available, notably programmes for the older audience, for children, or for special interest groups.

THE ABOLITION OF THE BROADCASTING FEE

By the late nineties, the source of virtually all NZ On Air's income, the Public Broadcasting Fee, had become an issue of concern to the Minister of Communications and to a vociferous minority of the public.

It was the biggest niggle the public had. They hated it. Put an extra cent on my tax, but.....(the fee), they hated it.

Williamson 2010

In 1998 a small group of people even went to court to challenge the constitutional basis of the fee. They lost, but even before they appealed the judgment events overtook them. As the government pondered change, an Act MP introduced a Private Member's Bill to abolish the Fee and replace it with funding from general taxation. The government's reaction was to let it be known that it would abolish the fee in the budget of May 1999, a few months ahead of the General Election.

Although this could be seen as a popular vote-catching move, the Government justified it as a fairer and more efficient means of funding public broadcasting. It would ease the cost burden on low and middle-income households, and it would save the costs of collection (some \$11m).

The Government was to guarantee NZ On Air's income at its existing level (\$87m) for the next three years, but it did not take the opportunity to add in the collection costs, which would have given NZ On Air the funding boost it was looking for.

There were concerns too that the change would mean that NZ On Air's funding was no longer ring-fenced, and that it could be cut back in future years. Because the funding was now directly in the hands of the politicians, there were fears of political interference and a loss of independence. It is interesting to note that such fears were not borne out in future years, and that the level of funding was subject to regular increases between 2000 and 2007, arguably more than could ever have been achieved had the Fee remained in place.

MAORI BROADCASTING

The Broadcasting Act was quite specific on NZ On Air's responsibilities toward Maori. One of the main functions of the agency was to reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture by "promoting Maori language and culture". This was translated into one of the agency's five goals for its first three years, simply expressed as "to support Maori broadcasting aspirations."

Funding decisions can also be seen in the context of an early directive from the Minister of Broadcasting Jonathan Hunt, that 6% of NZ On Air's income was to be spent on Maori broadcasting.

In its first year of operation, NZ On Air exceeded the Minister's requirement by a considerable margin, committing some 14% of its income to Maori. From a total of \$77m, just over \$4m was spent on Maori radio (see Chapter 12), and \$5.56 spent on Maori programmes for television.

Most of the money for television was committed to established programmes in te reo made by TVNZ such as *Te Karere* (daily Maori news) and *Waka Huia* (preserving oral history). This became the pattern over the early years up to 1995, with *Marae* being added to the core of regular programming from TVNZ.

There were also a number of mainstream documentaries on Maori topics, such as that on the Maori Battalion, or profiles of Dame Whina Cooper, Patricia Grace, and Donna Awatere, in the *Magic Kiwis* series.

A diverse range of programmes included the magazine programme *Pounamu*, a children's programme on Maori myths and legends for TV3, and a series of documentaries celebrating Maori entertainers under the banner *When The Haka Became Boogie*.

Drama was not neglected. 1993 saw the first New Zealand sitcom of the NZ On Air era, *Radio Wha Waho*, and a commitment to the *Nga Puna* series – six one hour plays for television by Maori writers.

Despite this impressive achievement of support for Maori programmes, the funding arrangements were about to change, with the announcement in 1993 that there was to be a separate funding body for Maori broadcasting, to be known as Te Mangai Paho.

This followed a legal case brought by Maori to compel the Government to recognise that the Maori language was a taonga, needing the Government's protection and support. The case went all the way to the Privy Council in the UK, where the Judges did not find in favour of the Maori case, but did require the Government to do more for the language.

This coincided with the views of the Minister of Broadcasting Maurice Williamson, who had been hearing the views of Maori at hui around the country. He supported the protection and promotion of the Maori language, but believed that Maori themselves should decide how best this should be done.

In the end that is why I thought it was better to break it up, to separately fund it, to have a Maori broadcasting funding agency whose focus was about delivering the deliverables we were after and I still think it was the right way to go to have Te Mangai Paho....

Williamson 2010

Te Mangai Paho took over the funding of Maori programmes from January 1995. Its source of funding was the allocation of 13.4% of the net income from the licence fee, in a direct transfer from NZ On Air. This amounted to some \$11.5m in its first full year of operation.

Te Mangai Paho's mission was to foster Maori language and culture through quality broadcasting. But NZ On Air continued to have its responsibility to promote Maori language and culture. Clearly some cooperation and collaboration was required.

NZ On Air's expectation was that Te Mangai Paho's priority would be to fund programmes produced by Maori primarily for Maori audiences. NZ On Air intended to make its focus programmes addressing Maori issues in a way relevant to all New Zealanders within mainstream programming (NZ On Air 1993/1994: 12).

Accordingly Maori programmes were funded by NZ On Air across its key genres. From 1995 drama included the final two programmes in the *Nga Puna* series begun in 1993, the sketch comedy series *Pio*, *Life and Times of Te Tutu*, and *Greenstone*, a mainstream drama with considerable attention paid to the Maori elements of the story. For the younger audience there was the ever-popular *Mai Time*. But perhaps the most significant achievement was in documentary, which saw a six part series *Rangatira* screen in 1997, telling the stories of contemporary Maori leaders.

One of the most successful series in bringing Maori issues to the mainstream was *The New Zealand Wars*, screened in 1998. Indeed this five-part series had a significant impact on the public's understanding of our 19th Century history, countering much conventional wisdom with a reframed Maori perspective. In this case NZ On Air was faced with a choice of two competing proposals, as chair Merv Norrish remembers it:

When it became clear there were two conflicting groups (of producers) who would have say, conflicting ideas about the way the Wars went and so on, we tried very hard to get them together so that there would be in the end one series which used the great experts and if there had to be differences of opinion, okay it showed them. The firms concerned were reluctant and the TV stations were reluctant. In the end if we wanted something on the Land Wars we had to make a choice and we chose the James Belich, primarily I think because it was different.

Norrish 2010

It is worth noting the length of time it took for this project to get to air. Its genesis was a proposal in 1993, finally bearing fruit on screen in 1998. But in terms of impact, if NZ On Air was concerned to make a difference to the broadcasting landscape, *The New Zealand Wars* can be seen as a prime example of the agency working at its best.

The second chair of NZ On Air, the distinguished broadcaster David Beatson, was concerned that NZ On Air should maintain a high profile for Maori broadcasting, especially after the establishment of Te Mangai Paho.

I really wanted to make sure that we didn't walk away from a responsibility to see that Maori TV didn't become a ghetto. We had a responsibility to see there was a Maori presence in the mainstream media.

Beatson 2011

Beatson also stressed the importance of the development of Maori skills in making programmes.

We wanted to nurture enough Maori creative talents to ensure that they could play a significant role in the production process of these programmes.

Beatson 2011

To this end in 1998 NZ On Air took the initiative in persuading TV One and TV3 to agree to targets for Maori programmes, effectively a quota, both for drama and documentary. For documentary it meant that five out of the thirty hours in the networks' documentary strands would be Maori projects, defined as those involving "substantial Maori creative participation on a topic of relevance to Maori language and culture" (NZ On Air 1998/1999: 26). Substantial Maori participation came to mean that ideally at least two of the three key creative roles – producer, writer and director, should be Maori. Hence documentaries such as *Tale of the Fish*, *Ngati Ocker*, *Hell for Leather*, and *Bastion Point – the Untold Story*.

The quota strategy was a response to the fact that "over the years broadcasters had shown they were simply not going to commission an acceptable number of Maori projects on their own initiative" (Whaanga 1999). Broadcasters were initially reluctant but agreed because they wanted funding approval for the following year's documentary strand.

There was some concern that the introduction of the quota might trouble some politicians.

I was always astounded that we got away with what we got away with. For instance we introduced a quota for Maori programmes and I thought the shit would really hit the fan when we did that, but we got away with it. I don't know why. I suspect it wasn't even noticed (by the politicians).

Horrocks 2010

In 1999 NZ On Air commissioned a Maori consultant Piripi Whaanga to review the strategy. He found that a number of commissioned projects had either stalled or were not proceeding. The biggest problem was in reconciling the commercial prime time interests of the broadcasters with NZ On Air's requirements and with the cultural aims of the programme-makers. The broadcasters tended to operate with a Pakeha mindset, and some projects had been "pushed off course" by the large production companies under the guise of mentoring.

By early 2000, NZ On Air had determined on a revised Maori strategy, to be known as Te Rautaki Maori. Its aims were to enhance the on-screen outcomes of mainstream Maori programming for television, and to improve the pool of Maori creative talent. Key elements of the strategy were encouraging broadcasters to take risks in commissioning Maori programming for prime time, and the development of a separate strand of Maori documentaries in prime time. In October 2000 Tainui Stephens was appointed by NZ On Air as a consultant Maori executive producer and mentor, Te Kai Urungi.

Consistent with the development of this strategy were efforts to work more closely with Te Mangai Paho. Several projects were identified as joint ventures, most notably the five part Maori drama series *Mataku*.

Meanwhile, as a backdrop to the work of Te Mangai Paho and NZ On Air, Maori had continued to agitate for their own television channel. A pilot scheme, Aotearoa Television Network (ATN), began in 1996, confined to the Auckland area, but ran into difficulties thanks to its poor management and the spending proclivities of its directors. NZ On Air resisted an attempt to use any of its money to bail out ATN.

Despite the failure of this pilot scheme, the Labour-led Government which came to power in 1999 was not slow to announce that Maori were to have their own national TV channel. With a target launch date of 2002, it was to be largely publicly funded, with the expectation that some of its programming would be funded by NZ On Air.

In its approach to Maori broadcasting over the first decade of its existence, NZ On Air adopted a proactive stance to create Maori programming for mainstream audiences and to persuade the broadcasters to overcome their reluctance to screening such programmes in prime time. Judging by the list of programmes funded and screened, across various genres, this can be seen as a most successful area of NZ On Air's activities in fulfilling its remit.

THE LEGACY OF RUTH HARLEY AND MERV NORRISH

In drawing the first decade of NZ On Air to a close, it is appropriate to acknowledge the special contribution made by the first Chair of the organisation, Merv Norrish, and his chosen Executive Director, Ruth Harley. Both left in 1995, having taken a novel concept and fashioned a modus operandi from scratch, setting a culture and tone for NZ On Air that was largely to endure throughout its history. Harley was visionary, proactive and determined in the battles with the broadcasters described above. Norrish was similarly resolved, firm but diplomatic – together they made a formidable combination in driving the crusade for more local content.

They were both totally committed to the notion of enabling New Zealanders to experience themselves – our stories, in our way, in our media. What they wanted to see was a range of diverse content that was important to our society. Taking their Board with them, they achieved extraordinary things. NZ On Air, and the New Zealand audience, are in their debt.

Sharlotte 2011

CHAPTER 5

TELEVISION – THE LABOUR YEARS

I find myself in Marian's (Hobbs) office and the first thing she said was we don't like NZ On Air. And it was ideological.....They saw NZ On Air as the nasty commercial model that had grown from the nasty commercial years of previous governments and they declared war.

Preston 2010

A CHANGE OF POLICY

The Labour-led government that came to power in 1999 certainly intended to make substantial changes to the media landscape, notably in attempting to transform TVNZ into more of a public service broadcaster. Throughout the next decade NZ On Air found itself somewhat on the defensive. Some like Gaylene Preston, a distinguished film-maker who was an early Labour appointment to the Board of NZ On Air, believed that the institution's very existence was threatened. It would seem that there was an undercurrent of debate behind closed doors about NZ On Air's future, although most public statements by the several Ministers of Broadcasting were supportive.

The first Labour Minister of Broadcasting was Marian Hobbs. She had tried to convince her Cabinet colleagues to adopt the radical step of turning TVNZ into a wholly non-commercial public broadcaster. Such an attempt was bound to fail – while there may have been some sympathy, there was certainly no appetite to find the kind of money needed. So Labour's policy was a compromise.

The starting point was the view that TVNZ, as a State-Owned Enterprise, had become too commercially-focused and was no longer operating as a public broadcaster. In an attempt to restore some measure of public broadcasting it was to be made clear that there was no question of TVNZ being sold and that it was to be given a Charter outlining programming requirements. Labour also intended to introduce format-specific quotas for both television and radio.

At the time this policy was made public just before the 1999 election, the then Chief Executive of NZ On Air, Jo Tyndall, noted to her Board that “there is no commitment to NZ On Air's long-term continued existence” (Tyndall 1999). She was concerned that NZ On Air should have a voice in the task force that Labour intended to establish to review funding options.

THE TVNZ CHARTER: FUNDING

It took some time for the form of words for the Charter to be agreed – it was finally made public in May 2001. TVNZ's objectives, in terms of promoting New Zealand's identity and culture, were to be very similar to those of NZ On Air, but it was notable that TVNZ was now required to screen programmes to inform, educate and entertain, the public service mantra that had disappeared from the 1989 Broadcasting Act. Significantly TVNZ was being given a public broadcasting mandate, in contrast to the local content mandate of NZ On Air.

But the battleground was over the funding of the Charter. The government accepted that TVNZ would need additional funding to implement the Charter, partly because there was an expectation of more local content, and partly to offset reduced advertising around programmes that were public service rather than commercial. TVNZ believed that if it was to revert to being a public broadcaster, it should have most if not all the public funding then vested in NZ On Air. Indeed it was understood by NZ On Air that TVNZ had written to the Government calling for around \$50m out of NZ On Air's total television budget of \$54m to be channelled directly to TVNZ to give effect to the Charter.

An additional difficulty for NZ On Air was that since late 1999 broadcasting policy had been moved to the newly-formed Ministry of Culture and Heritage. It was this body that was likely to be the conduit for any direct funding for TVNZ. It is hardly surprising that some inside NZ On Air saw the overall policy as a serious threat to their own role. Gaylene Preston saw the Government's position this way:

It all follows, we are going to strengthen TVNZ to be the public service provider, we are going to give it a Charter, and we are going to give it money and fund it through the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and NZ On Air is going to become a small, a much smaller thing, that looks after a bit of contestable funding.

Preston 2010

This view was echoed by the then Chair of the NZ On Air Board, Don Hunn, who believed that Steve Maharey, who became the Minister of Broadcasting after the 2002 election, supported TVNZ's ambition to secure much of the money from NZ On Air's contestable fund:

It was clear all the way through what Steve's (Maharey's) view was....we would have been reduced to community radio, NZ music, and TV3 if there was money. So our budget would have gone down to \$30 m .

Hunn 2010

As it turned out, both Labour Ministers of Broadcasting, Marian Hobbs and Steve Maharey, did commit to retaining NZ On Air and the contestable funding model. Both deny that there was ever any plan to shrink NZ On Air. But the fact that several Board members had the perceptions expressed above suggests that this was a rocky and confused period in the agency's history.

Far from reducing funding for NZ On Air, the Ministers of Broadcasting persuaded their Cabinet colleagues to increase the budget on several occasions, in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2007. It is clear that under Labour the agency benefited from the move from licence fee to direct government funding.

But there was a continuing argument over the way government funding for the Charter should be handled. By 2002 the Government had decided on a figure of \$12m for the first year of Charter funding, to be paid directly to TVNZ through the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. NZ On Air believed the money should have been channelled through them, but a proposal to this effect, submitted in Dec 2001, fell on deaf ears. The then Chair David Beatson argued against any bulk payment to TVNZ urging that the extra money should have been contestable and accountable through NZ On Air.

What should have been done was to say we (the Government) want to make a visible difference to the amount of local content – it is your job NZ On Air to achieve that and you have to account to us for that. You have got to go out and show us how that money is making a difference and that wasn't done.

Beatson 2011

Maharey's view was that a public institution like TVNZ should have control of some public funding. Furthermore the Charter money was effectively to be a test for TVNZ:

It was intended to give them some opportunities to demonstrate that they could provide programming options which would win some support from public and politicians and so on, that TVNZ had shifted direction, and was indicating its ability to become more of a public broadcaster, which would then result of course in more direct investment into them.

Maharey 2011

THE TVNZ CHARTER: CONTENT

From this point, there were two bodies charged with the responsibility of delivering the social and cultural objectives of broadcasting. TVNZ expressed its view of what the Charter funding was to be used for:

Funding is for programmes and initiatives to which TVNZ would not have committed funding in a wholly commercial environment.

TVNZ 2002/2003

Was this not what NZ On Air had been doing for the past twelve years? While it is true that the TVNZ Charter had a focus on public broadcasting, whereas NZ On Air's role was local content, there was obviously a considerable degree of overlap.

This became evident when TVNZ was obliged to reveal, in its Annual Reports, what it was spending the Charter money on. In the first two years of Charter funding, 2003 and 2004, most of the funding was spent on TVNZ's contribution to programmes which were part-funded by NZ On Air. Some were further series of established programmes like the youth programme *Flipside* or *The Big Art Trip*. Those who had expected the Charter to result in a slate of new programmes were disappointed that it was simply being used, for the most part, to pay for TVNZ's contributions to NZ On Air-funded programmes, in the form of licence fees.

By 2005 TVNZ had had a change of heart. It was announced that Charter funding, which had increased to \$15m per year, would no longer be allocated to programmes receiving funding from NZ On Air.

But TVNZ's decisions on what programmes should be funded from the Charter money remained inconsistent and controversial. Consider the prestige New Zealand Festival documentary strand, screening in prime time on Sunday nights from 2004 to 2008. Some programmes in this strand were substantially funded by NZ On Air, such as *Colin McCahon I Am*. Others such as those on David Lange or Michael King were entirely funded from Charter money, and can thus be cited as evidence that the Charter did make some difference. TVNZ also applied Charter funding to a few programmes for which contestable funding was unlikely to be sought, for example *Agenda*, thus arguably adding to the diversity of local programming.

For its part, NZ On Air tried to get clarity over the confusion of funding roles in three-way meetings with TVNZ and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, but to no avail. It accepted that some programmes could be "mixed-funded", with perhaps the best example being the significant historical series *Frontier of Dreams*, which had been conceived as a Charter programme in the early days of Labour's reforms.

TVNZ's somewhat arbitrary decisions about Charter funding eventually led to it losing control of the Charter money in 2008. It had been used for such evidently commercial programmes as *Mucking In* and *Sensing Murder*, but what finally outraged the Government was the allocation of some \$5m of Charter money to the production costs of the Beijing Olympics. The then Minister of Broadcasting Trevor Mallard announced that the Charter money would remain available to TVNZ, but that it would be dispensed through NZ On Air who would apply its processes of scrutiny and accountability.

It might be concluded that part of the problem had been inadequate monitoring of how TVNZ had been spending the Charter money. As Board member Judy Callingham observed:

If it had come through us the monitoring would have been done by us instead of very, very retrospectively by Culture and Heritage who probably didn't know what they were looking for whereas our staff did. And of course the whole thing turned out to be a shambles in the end and the money was taken off them, as it rightly should have been.

Callingham 2010

Maharey felt that TVNZ had failed the test of demonstrating they could use the public funding for public broadcasting:

In the end I think they proved they couldn't. No matter how much we crawled all over them, the commercial pull was always overwhelming for them.

Maharey 2011

Maharey notes that TVNZ initiated a different approach to public broadcasting, in seeking funding for two commercial-free digital channels, TVNZ 6 and TVNZ 7 (see below p 36).

So ultimately NZ On Air won out in the saga of the control of the Charter money. It was to gain a further victory after National came to power later in 2008.

THE REVIEW OF BROADCASTING

The wrangling over the Charter money was just one of the themes that played out during the period of the Labour-led Government. The backdrop was Labour's ongoing review of broadcasting, crystallised in a document known as *The Programme of Action*, made public in February 2005, a document that canvassed a number of options but reached few conclusions. But it had the effect of causing NZ On Air both to fear for its long-term survival and to be proactive in rethinking its role.

The result was a vision for a new NZ On Air, with an expanded role to accommodate the increasing importance of digital media and the fragmentation of free-to-air audiences. The essence of the new role was that NZ On Air would become a publisher of digital content across a variety of new platforms and that it should have its own portal for distribution of content (NZ On Air 2005). These changes would require legislation to amend the Broadcasting Act to enable NZ On Air to fund content for digital distribution without any commitment to broadcast.

This pre-emptive strike to secure its future proved a little too far-sighted and too ambitious for the Minister of Broadcasting. He expressed cautious support, but felt that the publisher concept would be a "radical step" (Maharey 2005). But the amendment to the legislation did go through, with effect from March 2008.

DIGITAL INITIATIVES

Despite the caution of the Minister, NZ On Air pressed ahead with two important digital initiatives. The first was the creation in 2008 of a Digital Content Partnership Fund, intended to encourage content with a multi-media focus, for which \$1m per year was set aside. Pending the change in legislation going through, the first projects funded had to have a broadcast element, such as AEF 360, the online content to support the popular children's drama series on TV2, *The Amazing Extraordinary Friends*. By 2009 NZ On Air was able to fund online content not associated with a broadcast, such as the award-winning interactive drama *Reservoir Hill*, viewable on TVNZ On Demand (see below p 87).

But NZ On Air's major digital initiative was the launch of the website NZ On Screen in October 2008. This was seen as a way to enable the public to access some of the many hours of local content that had been broadcast in the past – as its publicity put it “unlocking the treasure chest, providing access to the wealth of television, film and music video produced in New Zealand, along with knowledgeable background information.” Starting with some 200 titles, it grew to around 800 by 2010. Some are full programmes, others are short excerpts, often with a link to where the full programme can be found. Many are programmes that have been part-funded by NZ On Air, but many are from earlier times. Clearing the rights has been a difficult and arduous task.

The site is fully funded by NZ On Air, at around \$1m per year, and carries no advertising. It is governed by a trust, the NZ On Screen Trust (see p 125).

MAORI BROADCASTING AFTER 2000

Throughout the period of the Labour-led Government, NZ On Air continued to refine its policy to ensure that Maori had a presence in mainstream broadcasting, especially in prime time. This was principally achieved through the use of programme targets involving Maori, commonly known as the Maori quota. By 2004 this concept had evolved as follows:

Upwards of 15% of hours funded within a television “umbrella” funding arrangement will involve substantial Maori creative participation on a topic of relevance to Maori language and culture.

NZ On Air 2003/2004

Substantial Maori creative participation meant in practice that two of the three key roles of producer, director and writer/researcher must be Maori. This principle was most evidently applied in respect of umbrella funding such as the several documentary strands on TV One, TV2 and TV3. In 2001 NZ On Air came to an agreement with TVNZ that there would be a reduction in the target for *Documentary New Zealand* in return for a separate Maori documentary strand, seven half hour programmes under the *Nga Reo* banner. This strand included *Pania Of the Reef*.

As an example of the stories that ran under the Maori documentary quota in the mainstream strands, in 2004 notable titles included *Mana Wahine*, *Kohanga Kids*, *The Brown Factor*, and *Nesian Mystik*.

But this was only one aspect of NZ On Air's Maori policy. The agency also identified programmes where it encouraged producers to reflect Maori language and culture. The Annual Report for 2001/2002 listed a number of such programmes, among them:

- Comedies like *Spin Doctors*
- Dramas like *Street Legal* and *Mercy Peak*
- Documentaries like *Frontier of Dreams*
- Arts programmes like *The Big Art Trip*

Throughout this period (as noted above p 27), NZ On Air had the benefit of the expertise of its appointed Te Kai Urungi, Tainui Stephens. He believes that over the years there have been a range of well-made programmes that have established a “quality Maori presence” in the mainstream and in prime time. This has also given Maori creative talent the chance to develop and become more confident in their culture.

It's been great to see, not just the development and the growing interest in Maori stories, but particularly the evolution of our talent base, a talent base not just au fait with the skills of television and screen production but more comfortable with their cultural identity, matters of language, tikanga and so on.

Stephens 2011

Stephens was clear on the importance of establishing that Maori presence:

It's making television stories that contribute to our growing awareness as a nation. Certainly for the Maori viewer, to make our sense of identity, I guess, more secure in challenging times but also for the Pakeha audience, for them to be more familiar with their fellow Maori citizens in the way they think and what they do.

Stephens 2011

But the tension between how the broadcasters perceived their commercial interests and how Maori viewed their cultural interests, as noted earlier in the Whaanga report (see p 27), was still in play. Stephens expressed frustration that broadcaster interest often focused on what he termed “the Maori in trouble syndrome.”

Sometimes you'd get an insight into what documentaries had gone before the broadcaster and you know, very often you'd find more interesting stories than the usual diet of Maori in trouble and Maori fixing themselves, that they seemed to be interested in.

Stephens 2011

On the positive side, there were innovative and successful programmes like the drama *Mataku*, a series of chilling tales of the unexplained and unexpected, steeped in the supernatural world of Maori. This bilingual series, which also did well internationally, first screened on TV3 in prime time in 2001, but a later series moved to TV One in 2005.

Following research findings that indicated a strong interest in seeing Maori language programmes having subtitles, NZ On Air made funding available for subtitles for the repeat screenings of the Maori news programme *Te Karere*, and also for the children's programme *Pukana*. It also supported the bilingual series for youth *Tu Te Puehu*, which screened on both TV3 and Maori Television.

Throughout this period NZ On Air demonstrated its concern to reach the youth market by continuing to fund long-running programmes such as the ever popular *Mai Time*, succeeded by the youth programme *I Am TV*, screened on TV2. This latter programme received the most funding under the Maori broadcasting category in 2010 - \$1.4m.

By 2003, with the launch of the Maori Television Service (MTS) rapidly approaching, NZ On Air considered its policy towards the new channel. Acknowledging that the primary funder for MTS would be Te Mangai Paho, it saw their shared objective as the maximisation of screening opportunities for funded programmes. To this end it restated its focus on the three main free-to-air channels. But NZ On Air wanted to ensure that funded Maori programmes were available for re-transmission on MTS. Conversely if programmes were commissioned for a first screening on MTS, NZ On Air would require an advance commitment to re-screen the programme from one of the three main channels. It is difficult to see how these ambitious ideas could have worked in practice, and the re-transmission policy did not proceed.

In 2007 NZ On Air introduced a new definition for the Maori programmes it was funding:

We define a Maori programme as one that makes a conscious decision to reveal something of the past, present or future Maori world. Its creative core will be Maori. Its cultural control will be Maori, its management may be Maori or Pakeha.

Tainui Stephens explains the implications of this revised definition:

This definition helped to address the matter of how to assess the 'Maoriness' of a project. In other words, did it have cultural authority or authenticity, without interfering in an editorial way with the storytelling process. Just because a key creative is Maori does not automatically mean he/she has cultural credibility. This definition enabled us to assess the mana of the projects we funded: with regard to Maori creativity and Maori control.

Stephens 2011

For whatever reason, the quota within a strand was reduced to 10% in 2007. The same year saw a significant increase in documentaries funded for MTS, from one hour in 2006 to 15 hours in 2007. Notable among these was *Lost in Translation*, a series of 10 half hour programmes in which Michael King followed the versions of the Treaty of Waitangi that travelled round the country for signature.

More funding for MTS followed, with NZ On Air committing to funding 16 hours for a prime time documentary strand in 2008, *Pakipumeka Aotearoa*. Subjects included Sir Graham Latimer, Sir Paul Reeves, artist Rei Hamon, and the Ruatoria police raids.

NZ On Air held a hui with programme makers and broadcasters in May 2008, after which the agency announced it wanted to kick start some prime time Maori programme initiatives. For this purpose it set aside \$1m in the Maori Programmes Innovation Fund and called for proposals for programmes appealing to mainstream audiences in prime time. From this initiative came the comedy drama *Brown Bruthas* on TV3 and four one hour documentaries on TV One under the title *The Missing Piece*.

In terms of NZ On Air's desire to encourage the use of te reo in mainstream prime time, the programme *One Land* proved something of a breakthrough. *One Land*, which screened in 2010, was a reality programme based on transporting three Kiwi families back to the 1850s. Two of the families were of Maori ancestry, with one speaking only te reo. Despite having considerable Maori language content, the programme screened on TV One in prime time at 7.30 on Sunday.

In 2010 NZ On Air commissioned a major report into the environment around Maori programming on mainstream television channels. *Mainstream Maori Programming*, a comprehensive review by Nga Matakiirea, revealed a number of issues ranging from definitions to genre gaps and misunderstandings among both industry practitioners and broadcasters. It recommended a hui and a further review of Te Rautaki Maori. Some refinement of policy was under consideration in 2011.

It is often stated baldly that mainstream Maori programmes almost never screen in prime time (Nga Matakiirea 2010: 26). But this is surely misleading, as it does not take into account the quota programmes in the documentary strands, many of which have screened in prime time, or prestige one-off programmes like *What Really Happened? Waitangi*, funded from the Platinum fund, or dramas like *Mataku*. No doubt it is a challenge to persuade reluctant broadcasters to schedule Maori programmes in prime time, but it is clear that not only has NZ On Air made concerted efforts to support Maori programmes, but that much progress has been made. It would also be fair to conclude that the use of te reo in prime time programming has become more common and more acceptable, itself a tribute to the work of NZ On Air.

CHAPTER 6

TELEVISION
– CHANGES UNDER NATIONAL

THE END OF THE TVNZ CHARTER

The National Party announced its broadcasting policy in July 2008, several months before the election. The key element of the policy was to remove the \$15m of Charter funding from TVNZ altogether and make it contestable to the broadcasters, through NZ On Air. Although the policy did not spell out that the Charter would be abolished, National's broadcasting spokesman Jonathan Coleman made it clear that "the freeing up of direct charter funding to competition will unshackle TVNZ from the dual mandate that Labour had imposed on the broadcaster through the Charter." (Coleman 2008).

This was widely taken to mean the end of the Charter. Labour and some commentators saw it as the first step to the sale of TVNZ, despite the policy stating that National would maintain ownership of the state broadcaster. Several months after National's victory in the election the Prime Minister confirmed that the Charter was to go, claiming that it had not achieved its objectives, and a Bill to implement this change was duly introduced in December 2009.

The effect of National's policy was to reinforce NZ On Air's role as the funder of public broadcasting. It had always argued that it should have had control of the Charter funding – but it had taken a change of government to achieve this.

THE PLATINUM FUND

The additional funding was not to be put into the general contestable pot. It was to be designated as a separate fund, to be known as the Platinum Fund. It was to have specific criteria that set it apart from the existing contestable fund. The Government hoped that it would encourage competition for quality and really make a difference to what is seen on television.

For its part, NZ On Air saw the fund as supporting innovative content requiring a high level of subsidy. The agency was looking for programmes with "something important to say about New Zealand or New Zealand's place in the world." It added that prime time scheduling was preferred.

Accordingly the first group of programmes funded, in 2009, included several prime time dramas (*Bliss*, the story of Katherine Mansfield's early years; *Tangiwai*, the story of the 1953 train disaster; *Stolen*, about the kidnapping of baby Kahurangi), three historical docu-dramas, a five episode documentary series about New Zealand rivers, and a two part special for Maori television about violence towards children in New Zealand. The fund also paid for two serious current affairs programmes, broadcast in off-peak.

NZ On Air felt that these programmes were a significant addition to the total screen output. Chief Executive Jane Wrightson said the NZ On Air Board was particularly impressed with the calibre of the proposals they had funded. "Each project is ambitious in its own way. None would have been able to be supported without the resources of the Platinum Fund," she said.

What could also be said is that the projects selected demonstrated that the Platinum Fund was being used to fund distinctive quality programmes, of a different order from those funded by NZ On Air under normal business. Furthermore they amounted to a far more impressive slate than the programmes TVNZ chose to fund with Charter money. Ironically many of the programmes were supported and invested in by TVNZ.

TVNZ 6 AND TVNZ 7

These two digital channels were established in 2007 and 2008 respectively, largely funded under Labour by a government grant of \$79m over six years. They were free-to-air and non-commercial, but not eligible for NZ On Air funding. TVNZ 6 was a channel for children and families, while TVNZ 7 had news on the hour and a variety of factual programming, including some original programming such as *Media7* and *Back Benches*.

It was intended that after six years of government funding these channels would be self-supporting. This proved a false hope, and in 2011 the National Government made it clear no more funding would be forthcoming. TVNZ converted TVNZ 6 into an interactive pay channel for the 18 to 25 demographic, relabelled U, and announced that TVNZ 7 would close down when its funding ran out in mid-2012.

Critics bemoaned this as the final blow in the destruction of public broadcasting. But the Government had a ready answer: in New Zealand public broadcasting is NZ On Air. As the Minister of Broadcasting put it:

The Government has a clear commitment to public broadcasting content that informs, educates and entertains....That fits with our support of the NZ On Air model – letting the best projects compete for funding and giving them a chance to make it to our screens across a range of channels and, increasingly, a range of platforms.

Coleman 2011

So perversely enough, a government committed to minimal intervention found itself not just defending but endorsing the agency with maximum impact on the media scene. If NZ On Air had had any doubts about its future, they were surely dispelled by the outcome of National's policy.

THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

Towards the end of 2011, an issue arose that went to the heart of the political independence of NZ On Air. TV3 had scheduled a documentary on child poverty, funded by NZ On Air, to run in prime time four days before the general election on 26th November. In advance of the broadcast one of the board members of NZ On Air, Stephen McElrea, who is also the Prime Minister's electorate chairman and deputy chairman of the National Party's northern region, sent an e-mail to the Chair of NZ On Air Neil Walter, and to the Chief Executive Jane Wrightson, asking whether NZ On Air was aware of the timing of the programme and if not, whether it should have been.

NZ On Air took the view that it had been "dropped in it" by TV3. The Chair asked the Chief Executive immediately to write a strong letter of complaint to TV3, stating that NZ On Air was "deeply disappointed" by the scheduling decision. It risked "damaging NZ On Air's reputation and calls into question our political neutrality."

Considering what it might do to avert such a situation in the future, at its next Board meeting on 8th December, NZ On Air decided to seek legal advice as to whether it could insert a clause in its contracts preventing broadcasters from screening potentially contentious programmes during an election campaign.

Two key issues arose from this series of events. The first is whether NZ On Air has any say in the scheduling of the programmes it funds, or indeed should it have. Although the agency can be said to have some broad influence over scheduling, such as whether a programme is intended for prime time or not, or expressing concern at funded programmes of the same genre in a competing timeslot, it acknowledges that the final decision on scheduling must remain with the broadcaster.

Certainly the notion of attempting to control the content screened during an election was quickly seen as a step too far. Faced with consistently hostile reaction to any question of censorship, the NZ On Air Board backed away from its initial idea of a clause in programme contracts and decided to take no further action.

The more difficult issue is the role of political appointees to the Board of an agency such as NZ On Air. Once the facts of this episode became known, largely due to a journalist using the Official Information Act, questions were raised about the political independence of NZ On Air, given the role of Board member Stephen McElrea. He is a member of an NZ On Air working group that makes the decisions on individual titles within one of the Board-approved documentary strands, along with another member of the NZ On Air board, an executive from TV3 and a staff member of NZ On Air. At the Board meeting in December 2011, before the controversy became public knowledge, McElrea was also appointed a member of the working group making decisions on the Platinum Fund historical docu-dramas.

Is it appropriate that someone with such evident political affiliations should be involved in such decisions, even as one member of a group? Clearly McElrea needs to justify his presence at NZ On Air, so it is hardly reasonable to expect that he will take no part in funding decisions. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the only way to avoid any public perception of political bias is that persons with such clear and direct political affiliations should not be appointed to such boards in the first place.

Where does this leave NZ On Air? The departing Chair, Neil Walter, acknowledged that the saga had “done some damage to NZ On Air’s image” (Drinnan 2012). Indeed he told Mediawatch that “our reputation has taken quite a thrashing” (Mediawatch 2012). But he stood by McElrea, stating that “no action taken by any board member has contravened any of the principles of good governance.” (Drinnan 2012).

Significantly this is the only known example in the history of NZ On Air where the agency’s political independence has become an issue. But it is all the more important given that the way the Board of NZ On Air operates is much more hands-on than many other Boards of similar bodies. As pointed out in Chapter 7, the staff at NZ On Air prepare the ground and offer recommendations but most key funding decisions are made by the Board. Hence the need to be scrupulous in avoiding any perception that any Board member may display political bias in reaching decisions.

CHAPTER 7

THE FUNDING OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

GRANTS, SUBSIDIES OR INVESTMENTS

A question central to the funding of television programmes is the nature of the money NZ On Air is prepared to pay to support a programme. Is it by way of a grant, which presupposes no financial return to NZ On Air, or some form of investment that does include a return to the funder?

The intention of those who devised the scheme was unambiguous – the money was to be a grant. The term grant is used in the Cabinet Minute that provided the framework for deregulation:

Public service objectives should be met by a system of publicly funded grants....which should be bid for competitively by broadcasters.

Cabinet Minute 1988

Grant is also the term used in the Officials Report on which the Broadcasting Act was based (see above p 13), although the term is not used in the Act itself – the reference is to “making funds available on such terms and conditions as the Commission sees fit.”

But from the start the Board of NZ On Air determined that their funding should be seen not as a grant but as a subsidy. NZ On Air’s second Chief Executive, who had been the Finance Director in the early years, articulated the position clearly in a letter to TVNZ’s Chief Executive in April 1996:

NZ On Air does not consider its funding contribution to New Zealand television programmes as an investment but as a subsidy to the broadcaster, to provide for that part of the production and broadcasting costs which the broadcaster cannot justify in commercial terms.

Prowse 1996

Two contentious issues flowed from this position. The first was that NZ On Air policy was effectively to take an equity position in all television projects, meaning that it would take a share of any profits from the sale of programmes for which it had provided a subsidy. The share it required prompted much argument and was diluted over the years (see rights below).

The second was the contribution to a programme budget that NZ On Air expected the broadcaster to make. This contribution was by way of a licence fee entitling the broadcaster to so many plays of the programme. In some cases the broadcaster might add a further contribution, either cash or the use of facilities such as editing time on the broadcaster’s equipment. Such contributions would entitle the broadcaster to a degree of equity in the programme and thus a share of any profits from sales. But independent producers found it most unsatisfactory to be required to use broadcaster facilities often at inhospitable times, or at a higher rate than available elsewhere, and this form of contribution gradually fell into disuse.

It should also be noted that for practical purposes there may be little difference in whether the funding from NZ On Air should be described as a subsidy or an investment. In its Annual Report for 2010, in a departure from previous practice, each area of spending activity comes under an investment headline e.g. “television investments” or “music investments.” Chief Executive Jane Wrightson said this was done to reinforce that funding is not through passive cultural grants, but is determined on a set of business criteria.

BROADCASTER CONTRIBUTIONS

NZ On Air’s policy has been not to reveal the level of subsidy for any particular programme. But many of its Annual Reports show the average levels of subsidy for the various funding genres, as illustrated by the figures for 2010 in the table below.

Broadly speaking, NZ On Air tries to fix its level of subsidy for a programme as the minimum needed to get the programme made. It considers carefully the commercial value of the programme to the broadcaster, hence the difference between the subsidies for drama and comedy, which are mostly broadcast in prime time, and Children’s and Special Interest programmes, broadcast off-peak or on commercial-free Sunday

mornings. The proportion of the budget not funded by NZ On Air must be found primarily from the broadcaster contribution, although there may be additional sources of funding, for example from a co-production partner, other agencies such as the Film Commission or Te Mangai Paho, or private investors.

But the broadcaster contribution, specifically the licence fee, is the crucial element. As Chief Executive Chris Prowse summed it up in 1996: “broadcaster contributions need to reflect the value of New Zealand programming to their schedules” (Prowse 1996). The level of licence fees for individual programmes is negotiable between the programme producer and the broadcaster, but NZ On Air will have certain expectations in considering programme applications.

An indication of these expectations can be found in a document written by The Screen Production and Development Association (SPADA) in 2004, as guidelines for its members in preparing funding applications. The figures for licence fees below are described as “starting points for negotiation with the network.”

It should be noted that it is the producers who negotiate the licence fees with the network prior to submitting their application to NZ On Air, but that licence fees lower than NZ On Air’s expectations “may cause issues” around the application.

The following table combines broadcaster contributions (network licence fees) with figures for NZ On Air funding, to illustrate the basis on which programmes are funded.

TABLE 1 FUNDING COMPONENTS FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Category	Network licence fees per hour: minimum	NZ On Air funding per hour 2010: average	NZ On Air funding 2010: average % of budget
Adult Drama	\$60,000	\$468,000	48%
Children’s Drama	50,000	415,000	63%
Comedy	60,000	80,000	60%
Documentary	55,000	102,000	82.5%
Children’s	*	30,000	87%
Arts Series	12,000	94,000	84%
Off Peak Non Commercial eg Special Interest programmes	4,000	66,000	95%

Source: SPADA : TV Networks and NZ On Air Guidelines, 2004; NZ On Air Annual Report 2009/2010

* Licence fees for children’s programmes were not agreed at the time of this document. Subsequently NZ On Air and TVNZ agreed a figure of 6% of the budget for children’s programmes, excluding pre-school (no licence fee).

Note that the NZ On Air figures are averages and the licence fees are negotiable, hence the figures may appear not to add up. But it is clear that there is a considerable shortfall in the figures for drama, indicating that there will be additional sources of funding in many cases. Note too that the NZ On Air percentage of the budget for drama is considerably lower than the figures used in the chapter on drama.

This is because the figures used in the drama chapter are specific to a particular sample of drama programmes, whereas those used here refer to all dramas and hence include top-up funding for films where the NZ Film Commission is the majority funder and NZ On Air is a minority funder.

The figures for the network licence fees, agreed in 2004, remained constant through the rest of the decade, with the exception of drama, which increased to \$70,000 to \$80,000 per hour for first series and \$80,000 to \$90,000 for returning series.

Under pressure from the industry during the global financial crisis, in 2009 NZ On Air agreed to a reduction in licence fees for two years. NZ On Air's Chair, Neil Walter, justified this move by saying the agency had an obligation to support the health of the television industry which relied on it, and to help it through difficult times (Drinnan 2009).

RIGHTS ISSUES

Where NZ On Air's policy of subsidy blurs towards investment, this springs from regarding its funding as representing equity in the programme and therefore entitling it to recoupment rights should the programme generate sales.

It should be noted that the only rights NZ On Air holds are the rights to share in net income from programme sales. It does not hold selling or distribution rights or copyright.

NZ On Air's justification for holding recoupment rights is partly taking a responsible position as a good steward of public monies. In many cases it is not possible to estimate in advance the likely commercial returns from a project. If NZ On Air could know these returns when considering an application, the subsidy could be adjusted on the basis of these returns. Recoupment provides a mechanism for subsequent adjustment. A further consideration is that any recoupment received can provide funding for additional projects.

But NZ On Air's position provoked strong opposition from both broadcasters and producers. TVNZ in particular was critical of the fact that NZ On Air was earning very little in sales revenue and that the arrangement was inhibiting the export performance of New Zealand producers.

There was some truth to both these points. NZ On Air's own figures showed that over its first five years, it had received less than \$1m from sales, from funding of around \$250m (Prowse 1996). Producers argued that there was little incentive for them to try to sell their programmes abroad, because NZ On Air's policy was to recoup 80% of any profits from sales, with only 20% returned to the producer.

In the face of sustained protest from the industry, NZ On Air modified its position slightly in 2002, allowing producers to negotiate a 50/50 split in some cases, where they had brought in third party funding, or taken significant risk, or presented a robust marketing plan (NZ On Air 2005).

In December 2004, the Screen Council wrote to several Government Ministers asking them to direct NZ On Air and Te Mangai Paho to discontinue holding recoupment positions for screen production funding. Again the argument was that NZ On Air was operating as a commercial investor and that producers lacked incentives to market their productions.

NZ On Air responded that if they were no longer able to take a recoupment position, then they would no longer be able to receive income if a project became profitable, such as *NZ Idol*. The benefit of its approach was that public money was refunded where commercial success generated a sufficient return (NZ On Air 2005).

NZ On Air's view prevailed but discontent remained. By 2007 the incoming Chair Neil Walter and the incoming Chief Executive of NZ On Air, Jane Wrightson, decided that the wrangling had gone on long enough. After discussions involving both the Screen Council and SPADA, a new deal was struck giving producers 75% of sales income, with NZ On Air's share reducing to 25%. Furthermore where programmes had received less than \$200,000 in NZ On Air funding, producers would be entitled to 100% of sales income. This latter move was designed to assist documentary and factual programme makers in the hope that more people would see their programmes.

This new arrangement was widely regarded as a breakthrough and an indication of increased flexibility in NZ On Air's approach. It brought to an end one of the most protracted disputes in the history of NZ On Air.

THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING BETWEEN GENRES

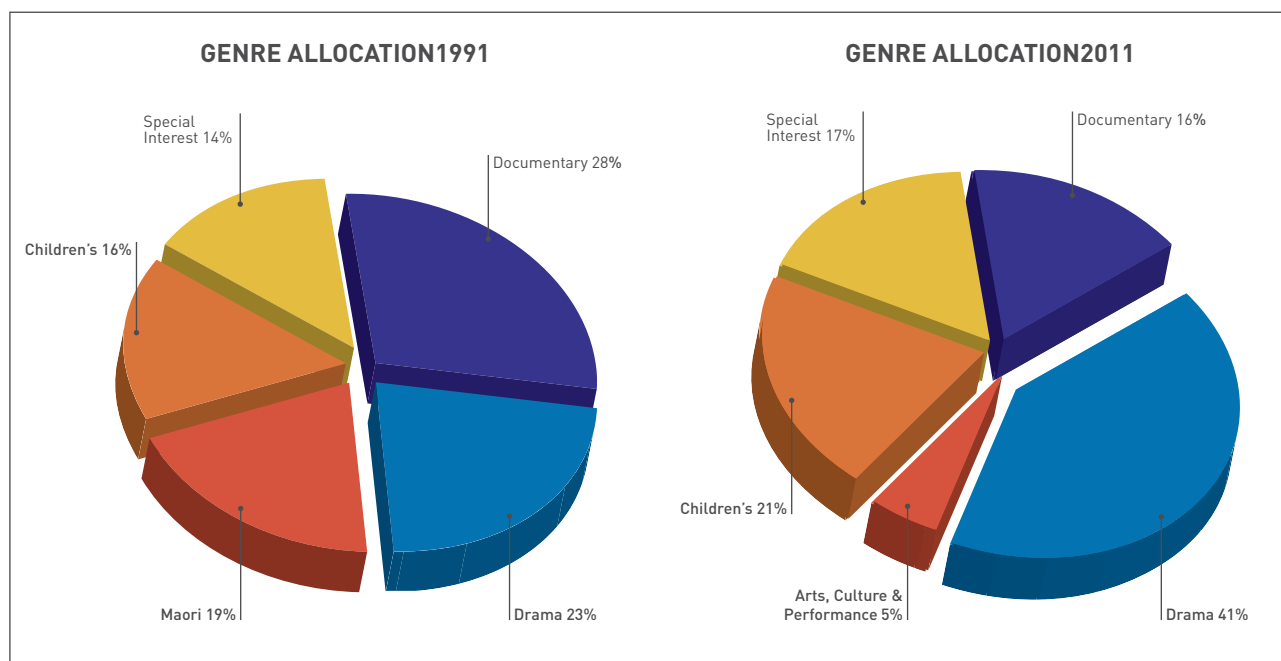
The division of the contestable fund between the various genres or funding categories has followed a broadly similar pattern through the years. It is not clear how NZ On Air arrived at the original breakdown. Emily Loughnan, the first television manager, remembers it this way:

We looked at our objectives and what we wanted to achieve... and where our audiences were.... You can get more bang for your buck in certain strands and genres... It was all driven out of the audiences in the Act and then how do we reach them. How do we divide it up? What we did was reasonably rough and divided up with our objectives for the year.

Loughnan 2011

The graphs below provide a comparison between the genre allocation in 1991 and in 2011.

FIG 3 GENRE ALLOCATION 1991 AND 2011



Source: NZ On Air Annual Reports 1990/1991 and 2010/2011

It can be seen that the most significant change is the increased proportion taken by drama and comedy, and the corresponding reduction in documentary. The 2011 figures include the Platinum Fund, most going to drama.

The responsibility for Maori programming was taken over by Te Mangai Paho in 1995, although NZ On Air continued to support Maori programmes within its funding categories. The shares for the children's and special interest (minorities) categories have increased slightly since 1991.

The allocation of the money within each of the genre funds to specific programmes has become NZ On Air's primary activity. Regular genre funding rounds were established in 2008, at which Board members make the decisions following recommendations from NZ On Air staff. It was the practice that each Board member would receive a suitcase of paperwork before meetings, to assist their decision-making. By 2011 the suitcase was giving way to i-Pads and a digital system. The following chapters examine each of the funding categories in detail, aiming to provide an overview of NZ On Air's strategy and an outline of the themes, trends and issues that have emerged over the period.

CHAPTER 8

THE THREATENED GENRES – DRAMA AND COMEDY

TRISHA DUNLEAVY

INTRODUCTION

As particularly expensive production categories, both of which are prone to ‘market failure’, TV drama and comedy have been critical indicators of NZ On Air’s effectiveness in allocating public funding to broadcast projects that can help fulfil its central obligation to “reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture”. While these categories bring significant potentials for the articulation and representation of New Zealand ‘cultural identity’, drama and comedy are also the two most expensive production forms in television that NZ On Air supports.

Given this situation and context, NZ On Air’s inventive strategies and distinctive funding allocation model have combined to yield two main outcomes for local drama and comedy since 1989. These have maximised both the available opportunities to develop, create, and produce new programmes, and the possibilities for these programmes to be as responsive as possible to the demonstrated expectations and requirements of viewers. The strategic importance of NZ On Air funding can be clearly demonstrated by investigating the economic fragility of these programme categories in New Zealand’s unusually small and deregulated TV market. Hence, as well as examining NZ On Air’s approaches to and achievements in local drama and comedy, this chapter will also highlight the economic barriers to greater private investment in them by the free-to-air networks who instigate NZ On Air’s processes via their offer of a broadcast timeslot to these programmes.

THE GENERAL CONTEXT FOR LOCAL TV DRAMA AND COMEDY

While the broad popularity and cultural contributions of both these domestic production categories have been evident since the early 1970s, they have always been constrained by New Zealand’s over-reliance on imported programmes and the corresponding dearth of local examples. Both are the expected consequences of New Zealand’s limited market size and ability to invest in TV production. Accepting drama and comedy’s higher production cost than most other local content forms, New Zealand TV’s general characteristics have influenced these categories in three main ways.

First, the vast majority of TV dramas and comedies that screen in New Zealand are imported, originating (in order of annual hours on screen) from the United States, Britain, and Australia. A basic difference between local programmes in these categories and imported dramas and comedies, therefore, is the rarity of the former and overwhelming dominance of the latter.

Second, the dominance of imported drama and comedies has left viewers more likely to judge a new locally-produced programme against an imported (as opposed to an appropriate local) counterpart.

Third, the sustained schedule presence and higher episode volume of imported dramas and comedies, as compared with domestic product, entails some additional advantages for their commercial performance on New Zealand channels. Audience loyalty to foreign dramas and comedies is strengthened by its characteristically larger episode output and more enduring presence in schedules, the leading example being American imports. Motivated by the prospect of very lucrative ‘back-end’ profits from domestic ‘syndication’ sales, the commissioners and producers of American dramas and scripted comedies aim for a minimum of 100 episodes per production.

The above conditions have created a more challenging market position for local drama and comedy than that of most other local content categories, hence the characterisation of both as ‘threatened genres’ in NZ On Air’s official remit and in this report. Public investment in local drama and comedy works to counter two longstanding disincentives to the commissioning of such programmes by New Zealand’s leading broadcast networks. First, it helps meet their far higher acquisition cost (as original local programmes) than that of imported TV dramas and comedies, thereby facilitating their continued production. Second, it helps to reduce the commercial anxieties of these TV networks which centre on the ‘opportunity cost’ that they incur as a consequence of their decisions to devote potentially lucrative time-slots to untested local dramas or comedies, as compared with the affordable and low-risk alternative of acquiring demonstrably popular imports to fill their schedules and brand their channels.

NZ On Air funding can only be allocated to TV projects which have obtained the commitment of a broadcast network. Accordingly, a major arbiter of NZ On Air's ability to fund drama and comedy production is the willingness of networks to air the resulting programmes and do so in time-slots appropriate to the level of public funding involved. Since NZ On Air's creation, TV One, TV2, and TV3 have remained the leading hosts for local content in both these categories. Within the drama and comedy programming they offer, these channels are obliged to provide a schedule mix which, although consistently dominated by imports, attempts to include some New Zealand examples. Yet while these free-to-air channels are ideal hosts for local TV drama and comedy product precisely because they hold the highest proportion of national audience eyeballs, neither TVNZ nor Mediaworks (owner of TV3 and FOUR) can afford to meet the full costs of local productions in either category, a situation that is not paralleled in larger national TV markets and which underlines the necessity for continued public investment as a way to ensure that local examples of TV drama and comedy are available to New Zealanders.

LOCAL DRAMA AND COMEDY AS CATEGORIES AND FORMS

Although local drama and comedy are equally crucial vehicles for the reflection of 'cultural identity' on New Zealand television, in terms of its primetime presence and its annual hours-on-screen totals, drama has been the more prevalent of the two categories since 1970, when a significant expansion in TV drama production was finally stimulated by an official recognition of its cultural attributes in the 1973 Adam Report (Adam 1973). Given their usually higher per hour production costs than local comedy programmes, a majority of New Zealand TV dramas have been devised for broad-audience engagement and created for peak prime time (8.30-10.30 pm) slots. Hence the schedule profile of local drama programming has frequently exceeded that of local comedy. The audience attention and ongoing loyalty that leading local dramas receive has been further assisted by the sustained screen presence of local drama's two most prolific forms – the continuing soap opera and renewable drama series – both of which are designed to function as ongoing 'flagships' for their host network.

As a pattern established well before NZ On Air's inception, success in long-form comedy has been rather more elusive than it has in long-form drama. Although local sketch-based, stand-up and (more recently) comedic panel shows have all performed well, the stumbling block for the comedy category has been any consistent success with local sitcom. This form is strategically important to the 'comedy' category in most other comedy-producing countries.

If there is to be a future for New Zealand-produced sitcom, the evidence of recent years suggests that this is most likely to come from the deployment of aesthetic alternatives to the studio-shot 'traditional sitcom' form. Whereas local examples of 'traditional sitcom' have generally failed in the last 22 years, unprecedented successes for local sitcom have been achieved by programmes that have eschewed 'studio-shot' in favour of 'single-camera' and/or 'animated' approaches.

New Zealand TV drama and comedy categories span a diverse range of forms, these involving different audience appeals, narrative structures, aesthetics, modes of production, and degrees of investment cost. The financial reliance of these categories on public funding is confirmed by the proportion to the total cost that NZ On Air investment currently provides per production, this currently averaging 80 per cent for drama as compared with an average of 78 per cent for comedy (Murray, 2010: 7). Note that these figures relate to a specific sample of programmes.

The main forms of drama and comedy programming that NZ On Air has funded during its two decades are outlined, first in drama and then in comedy, below. The descriptions attached to each form highlight a predominance of either serial or episodic storytelling, with the term 'renewable' underlining the potential for schedule longevity. Indicative examples from the last decade are provided in each case for additional clarity. Where it appears, the term 'high-end' implies a location at the high production value end of the production cost spectrum within each category. Although it would have been useful to include them, the relative costs of each drama or comedy form cannot be stipulated here due to the commercial sensitivity of this information. Although a limited total funding purse allows only some of the drama and comedy forms listed to be commissioned in any given year, NZ On Air has facilitated all of the forms below since its inception in 1989.

DOMINANT FORMS OF LOCAL COMEDY

- Single-camera sitcom (high-end budget, scripted renewable series form, this approach is gradually replacing the studio-shot 'traditional sitcom'). *Seven Periods with Mr Gormsby, Jaquie Brown Diaries, Diplomatic Immunity, Super City.*
- Animated sitcom (high-end budget, scripted renewable series form). Pioneered by *The Flintstones*, the animated sitcom was re-established by *The Simpsons*. *bro'Town* is the only New Zealand example yet produced.
- Comedy verité (scripted renewable series form, blends 'workplace sitcom' with 'reality docusoap', the first comedy verité was BBC2's *The Office*). *The Pretender* and *Wayne Anderson: Glory Days*.
- Traditional sitcom (scripted, renewable series form, studio-shot via multi-camera set-up, this longstanding sitcom form is currently being supplanted in American and British TV by the three 'alternative' forms above). *Melody Rules, Spin Doctors, Welcome to Paradise.*
- Scripted sketch series (scripted, renewable, character-based, New Zealand examples have been an important vehicle for political satire). *More Issues, Skitz, Facelift, Radiradirah, WannaBen, The Jono Project.*
- Scripted comedic 'factual' series (can be studio-based but deploys location-shot inserts, anchored by established comedic talent). *Unauthorised History of New Zealand, Rural Drift.*
- Satirical magazine series (studio-based, with the 'panel show' being possible here). *Eating Media Lunch, 7 Days.*
- Stand-up comedy (performance-oriented, 'theatrical naturalism' aesthetic). *AotearoHa, Comedy Gala.*
- One-off comedy special (an occasional form involving considerable variation). *Pete and Pio, The Topp Twins.*

DOMINANT FORMS OF LOCAL DRAMA

- Quality serial (high-end, hour-long episodes, one 'overarching' story spans all the episodes, entirely serialised, includes 'closed' mini-serial as well as renewable serial forms). *The Insider's Guide to Happiness, The Cult, This is Not My Life.*
- Renewable series (high-end, hour-long episodes, concept centres on a story-generating 'problematic', with ongoing serial sub-plots). *Outrageous Fortune, The Almighty Johnsons, Go Girls, Nothing Trivial.*
- Children's serial (high-end, hour-long or half-hour episodes). *Time Trackers, Paradise Café, Kaitangata Twitch.*
- Telefeature (high-end, feature-length, made for TV one-off). *Piece of My Heart, Until Proven Innocent, Tangiwai, Rage, Billy, Bliss.*
- Anthology series (high-end budget, comprises a group of shorter one-off dramas of 30-50 minutes). *Montana Sunday Theatre 1 and 2, TV3 One-Off Dramas, Matakū 1, 2 and 3.*
- Feature film (high-end budget, these receive 'top-up' funding only given their centrality to the NZFC's remit). *Sione's Wedding, The Strength of Water, Boy, Home By Christmas.*
- Continuing soap opera ('open serial' form, tendency for unrivalled longevity within drama, fast-turn-around production allows up to five half-hour episodes weekly, the world's longest-running prime time example is *Coronation Street*). New Zealand's most successful example since 1989 is *Shortland Street* which NZ On Air co-funded for four series.

LOCAL DRAMA, COMEDY AND NEW ZEALAND TV'S META-SCHEDULE

Having hosted the vast majority of local drama and comedy in the last 22 years, TV One, TV2, and TV3 have provided important outlets for both categories and this pattern continues. These channels ensure maximum exposure for programmes whose high production costs render them a scarce and limited resource. Additionally, a high exposure for these programmes is integral to the success of the 'cultural identity' work that they are publicly-funded to do.

In any national TV system, and regardless of their source, drama and comedy programmes tend to debut in prime time slots where audience numbers reach their highest levels for the day. Although there are various reasons why local dramas and comedies are placed in prime time slots, the most important one is New Zealand's limited population size and thus the relatively small potential audience. From the perspective of commercial networks like TVNZ and TV3, any programme placed in a prime time timeslot is subject to more intense pressure to perform in ratings terms than programmes scheduled earlier in the day or later in the evening. This ratings pressure is more characteristic of advertiser-funded broadcast channels than it is for specialist or niche channels, which in New Zealand tend to be found among Sky TV's multi-channel array and are mostly subscription-funded.

Although the main consequence of such intense performance pressure for local drama and comedy is in general little room for risk-taking, this programming still needs to be able to experiment in order to innovate and in doing so remain culturally relevant, 'cutting edge', and appealing to viewers. It is in pursuit of progressiveness rather than stasis for local drama and comedy, that the continued ability to experiment is considered by NZ On Air and the TV production industry to be vital to the development and sustainability of programming in these categories. This is why inventive new local programmes are sometimes introduced in late prime time slots (from 9.30 pm or later) where the ratings pressure is less intense. Networks have also attempted to maximise the exposure and prospects for new local dramas and comedies through the placement of established popular imported shows (or 'tentpoles')

in their schedules so as to maximise the audience that is delivered to new local shows. Significantly, however, the channel destination and schedule placement of a new local drama and comedy, even though this exerts many influences on the programme's design, is outside the authority of NZ On Air.

The presence of more channels and the potential for further market fragmentation could have threatened local TV drama and comedy as sustainable categories after 2000, but it has not. In 2011, the three main free-to-air channels average a combined primetime audience share of 68 per cent, a comfortable majority of the national audience. In view of this continuing concentration of audience eyeballs on TV One, TV2, and TV3, it seems appropriate for NZ On Air to continue to prioritise these channels as outlets for new local dramas and comedies.

DRAMA, COMEDY, AND THE INCEPTION OF NZ ON AIR

Despite the influence exerted by TVNZ and TV3 over the kinds of dramas and comedies that have been commissioned since 1989, NZ On Air has been the institutional mentor of these categories. When the inception of the public broadcasting agency was first mooted in 1988, 'drama' was explicitly included, and 'comedy' implicitly, in the range of TV production categories that the new agency would thenceforth receive PBF funding to support. Notwithstanding the officials' astuteness and foresight in devising the principles that would allow NZ On Air to prioritise spending, the Officials Report that outlined the blueprint for NZ On Air can be accused of over-estimating how much private investment would be available to fund drama and comedy in a deregulated, commercialised television environment (Officials Report 1988).

The perceived success of the model through which NZ On Air has allocated public funding to drama and comedy owes much to the efficacy of the criteria and strategies that the agency developed in its first years of operation. Although adhering faithfully to the general principles outlined in the 1988 Officials Report, the fledgling NZ On Air was also given useful additional scope in its founding legislation to make funding available on whatever "terms and conditions" it considered necessary.

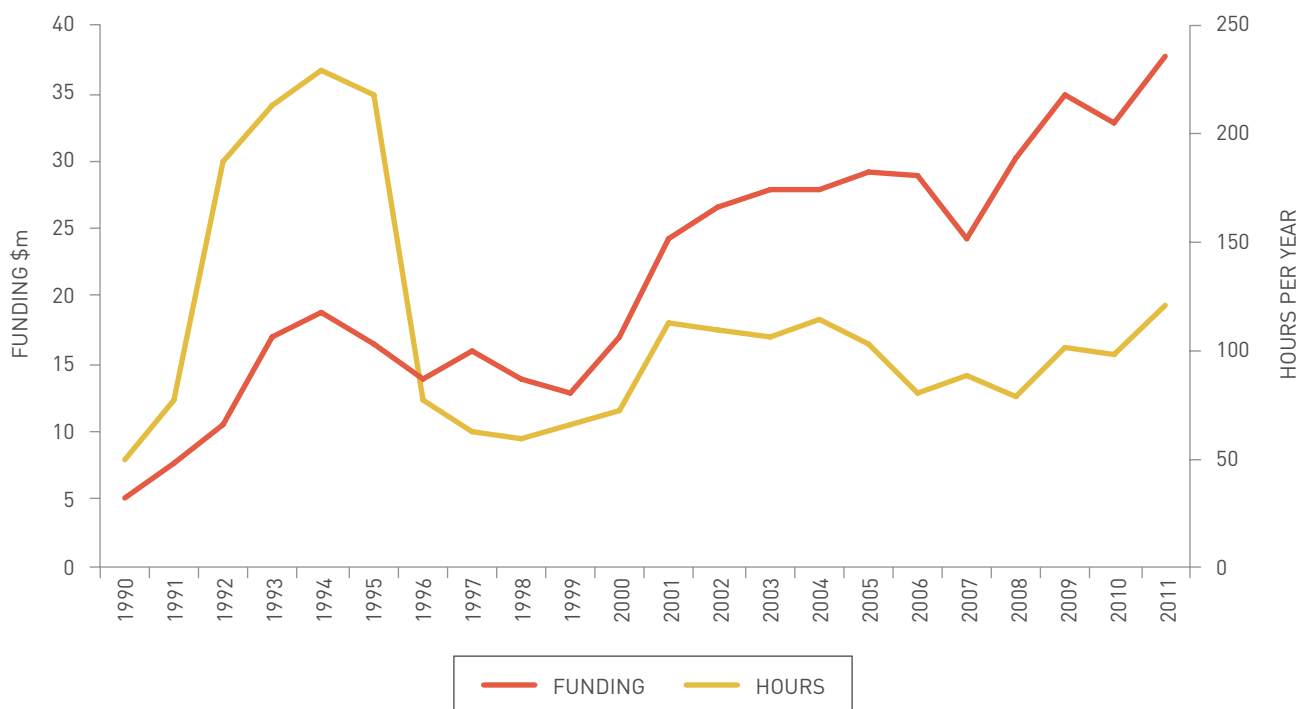
Three elements of NZ On Air’s operation have been important to its ability to reconcile its public broadcasting remit with a limited funding supply in ways that can maximise the outcomes in drama and comedy (Dunleavy, 2008: 808). One is that NZ On Air’s TV funding is disbursed competitively, an approach geared to match public funding with what are considered the strongest programme ideas. Another is that this funding is disbursed directly to producers rather than to networks so that it buys programmes, not services. Third, is that the resulting TV programmes can screen on private as well as public networks, provided they air on broadcast channels with national reach.

Needing to allocate its drama funding in ways that maximise the audience to justify the level of public finance involved, NZ On Air chose mainly to focus on

programmes devised for prime time slots on TV One, TV2 or TV3. Notwithstanding this particular limitation on programme possibilities, NZ On Air has endeavoured to offset this by encouraging diversity through the maintaining of a range of genres and forms, by its attempts to identify and fill ‘gaps’ within this range, and through its efforts to ensure the availability of local programming to different age groups. NZ On Air’s response to the commercial imperatives that shape new drama and comedy programmes destined for these advertiser-funded channels, has been to value originality and ‘localness’ in concept design and to maximise as far as possible the opportunities for creative innovation.

The following graph illustrates the pattern of funding and hours for drama and comedy over the period.

FIG 4 DRAMA AND COMEDY FUNDING AND HOURS 1990-2011



Source: NZ On Air Annual Reports 1990 -2011

The spike in hours from 1992 to 1995 is *Shortland Street* during the four years of NZ On Air funding (see above p 20). The increase in funding in 2011 reflects spending from the Platinum Fund. Note that costs per hour have increased in recent years.

PRODUCTION TRENDS IN LOCAL COMEDY: THE 1990S

Diversification in local comedy was stimulated by the initial competition between TVNZ and TV3, whose combined commissions in this category – mostly sitcoms and sketch shows – gave rise to a ‘comedy boom’. While further attempts at studio-based sitcom were one element of this expansion in comedy commissioning, local sketch series proved to be more popular than local sitcom. By the late 1990s, however, some local sitcoms were being shot on ‘single-camera’ rather than in the studio-based ‘traditional sitcom’ style. An early example was *Letter to Blanchy* (1994-97), a programme that became the highest rating local sitcom of the decade.

Through the 1990s, however, the more significant vehicle for creative innovation in comedy was the scripted sketch series. The popularity and longevity of TV One’s *Issues* and *More Issues* series (which together reached seven seasons) underlined that political satire remained popular through this decade. Yet whereas TV One’s sketch series were more often grounded in political satire, the younger (18-39) adult demographics that were increasingly being sought by the networks seemed more responsive to character-based sketch series. Accordingly, innovation turned in this direction. Two of the most successful 1990s sketch series examples were *Skitz* (1993-97) and *The Topp Twins* (1996-99), these both screening on TV3 and enduring for several seasons. The third most prolific and well-received comedy form in this first decade of NZ On Air was the stand-up series, a leading example of which was *Pulp Comedy* (1996-2003) which enjoyed eight seasons. Apparent by the late 1990s and a pattern that has continued since then, was that TV3 was becoming the schedule ‘home’ for local TV comedy in most forms.

COMEDY AFTER 2000 AND THE RISE OF ALTERNATIVE SITCOMS

Local comedy since 2000 has focussed on series forms – including sitcoms, sketch shows, non-fictional series, and stand-up formats – all of which have the capacity for a weekly appearance in schedules and renewal, for successive seasons of episodes, where they prove popular with viewers. These areas of comedy, scripted and unscripted, have helped to increase the diversity, creative innovation and popularity of local comedy overall. Linking innovation in scripted comedy to the reflection of ‘cultural identity’, the minutes from a 2008 NZ On Air Board meeting note the aim to locate and develop “exciting, challenging and entertaining ideas aimed at a mainstream audience that would provide a fresh insight into New Zealand’s current identity and culture” (cited in Murray, 2010: 14). Given their higher production cost than unscripted comedy programmes and their tendency to be devised for prime time slots on leading channels, scripted series comedies have required a higher proportion of NZ On Air investment per half-hour episode than unscripted comedy forms.

Since 2000, more of NZ On Air’s scripted comedy funding has been dedicated to situation-based than to sketch comedy series, this indicating perceptions by NZ On Air and the networks of an increased strength and more positive reception for the former. Bearing in mind the troubled history of local sitcoms, it is important that newer sitcoms have tended to avoid the multi-camera, studio-bound conventions of traditional sitcom, a form whose historic international appeal is now subsiding. While very different from traditional sitcom in terms of their aesthetic conventions and narrative possibilities, single-camera sitcoms are still connected with their studio-bound forerunners through their conceptual reliance on a static situation of entrapment and conflict, a core group of likeable, though flawed characters, and the narrative circularity of the episodes.

Because NZ On Air has funded a broader range of aesthetic approaches to these series than was apparent in the 1990s, alternative sitcom has also been an important focus for innovation in the comedy category overall. Innovative examples funded by NZ On Air in the last decade include TV One's *Seven Periods with Mr. Gormsby* and *Spin Doctors*, along with TV3's *bro'Town*, *The Millen Baird Show*, *The Pretender*, *The Jaquie Brown Diaries* and *Super City*. The popularity of so many of these examples is also indicative of the allure for New Zealand viewers of all three approaches to alternative sitcom – the single-camera, animated, and comedy verité – whose rising prevalence and popularity has allowed them to all but replace traditional sitcoms on American broadcast channels.

First and most prevalent in terms of locally-produced alternative sitcom has been the single-camera series, strong examples including *Seven Periods with Mr. Gormsby*, *The Jaquie Brown Diaries* and *Super City*. Second, albeit less common, is comedy verité, a form that combines the conceptual attributes of traditional sitcom with the aesthetics and visual style of the 'reality docusoap', and was popularised by the internationally successful BBC series *The Office*. Indicative NZ On Air-funded examples of comedy verité have been *The Pretender* (TV3) and *Wayne Anderson: Glory Days* (Prime). The third form of situation-based comedy to which NZ On Air has devoted funding is the animated series, whose international popularity is reflected in the 'blockbuster' status achieved by the three leading American examples *The Simpsons*, *South Park* and *Family Guy*. Although its 'limited animation' aesthetic makes this kind of comedy very expensive to produce, animated sitcom is internationally considered to hold particular appeal for young adults, an important audience in terms of NZ On Air's remit. However, animated sitcom is also capable of general audience appeal, another reason why it can deliver 'value for money' for New Zealand viewers despite its higher cost. Importantly, the one example of animated series comedy that NZ On Air has funded, *bro'Town* (TV3), emerged the local sitcom hit of the past 22 years.

On screen from 2004-09, *bro'Town* was a rare example in the history of local sitcom to last in a mid prime time slot for five successive years. Of all the sitcoms New Zealand has ever produced, only *Gliding On* (1981-85) managed this same feat. But where *Gliding On* was adult-oriented, the innovation and unique achievement of *bro'Town* was its simultaneous appeal, as with *The Simpsons*, to adults as well as children. Because children responded to *bro'Town* as favourably as adults, the series managed to achieve an iconic status in New Zealand popular culture. Before *bro'Town*, no other New Zealand comedy series had ever been sufficiently popular to help sell such consumer items as school lunch boxes, stationery, T-shirts and muesli bars.

Audience responses to *bro'Town* also suggest that local sitcoms are thought to offer contemporary and relevant cultural representations (TNS 2004). While *bro'Town* was also the first local sitcom to resonate strongly with Pacific viewers, its edgy constructions of Samoan culture were also considered to facilitate its "widespread appeal". As for the contemporaneity of *bro'Town*, audience research indicated that it was seen to reflect the "truth about living in multi-cultural New Zealand" and to provide an authentic account of "everyday life". Although this same research also showed that *bro'Town* did not please everyone – its gritty representations taking "things too far" for some viewers – ratings figures suggested that the general response to this programme was overwhelmingly positive.

COMEDY AFTER 2000 AND NON-FICTIONAL FORMS

As an area of comedy that includes examples as different from each other as *Eating Media Lunch*, *The Unauthorised History of New Zealand*, and *Pulp Sport*, there has been significant success, since 2000, in what could loosely be termed 'non-fictional' local comedy programmes. In response to their demonstrated audience popularity, the proportion of local comedy hours taken up by factual (as opposed to fictional situation-based) forms has also increased. Although these non-fictional forms vary considerably, two main approaches have been evident. One is the studio-based series, this ranging from satirical magazine shows like *Eating Media Lunch* to mock-factual formats such as *The Unauthorised History of New Zealand*. The other has been stand-up comedy series and specials, notably *Comedy Gala* and *AotearoHa*.

Launched in 2009, recent innovation in terms of the first of these two approaches to non-fictional comedy is exemplified by the panel series *7 Days* (TV3), in which a group of leading comedians is arranged into two teams and given successive tasks that require them to offer comedic reflections on current news events. As a programme that is considered by NZ On Air to be unusually "cost effective" (Usmar 2011), *7 Days* was introduced at 10 pm in 2009 and moved to 9.30 pm in 2010, in recognition of its established appeal. In its fourth season by 2011, *7 Days* has established a secure 'beachhead' on TV3 and amassed 85 episodes. Its success and continuity have combined to allow *7 Days* to function as a rare local comedy 'tentpole' in TV3's Friday night schedule upon which new local comedies can be effectively 'hammocked' when starting in the slot that follows. In early 2011, for example, *7 Days* provided an effective lead-in for TV3's new single-camera series, *Super City*.

COMEDY TODAY

Although local comedy programming has been important to both TVNZ and TV3, the overall tendency has been for more NZ On Air-funded comedy to be aired on TV3. For TV3, comedy programming, certain forms of which are cheaper to provide than local drama, can provide a reasonable local content presence, with *7 Days* being an indicative example. Whereas TV2 offers *Shortland Street*, which is stripped over five nights a week and thus dominates the channel's mid prime time schedule, TV3 does not have a local soap opera, hence its greater attraction to local comedies. Consequently the schedule requirements of TV3 have been particularly important in shaping the types of comedy that NZ On Air has funded and which New Zealanders see.

PRODUCTION TRENDS IN LOCAL DRAMA: THE 1990S

Shortland Street, a case study of which appears earlier in this report (p 20), was undoubtedly the most successful drama programme of NZ On Air's first years and was also the highest-risk undertaking in local TV production for any New Zealand network in the early years of competition. Through the often tumultuous period of change in television that the last 22 years represents, the continuity, high output and popularity of *Shortland Street* have allowed it to claim mid prime time schedule space that would otherwise have been given to imported programmes, to reduce the level of audience exposure to imported drama in peak viewing times, and to foster, particularly among the impressionable 14-24 demographic for which this programme was initially created, a viewing taste and appetite for local drama product (Dunleavy 2003: 32).

Other local TV drama forms – renewable drama series, anthology-packaged one-offs, telefeatures, and quality serials – were also being produced through the 1990s. Successes included the two mini-series, *An Angel at My Table* and *Bread and Roses*, and the 1995 *Montana Sunday Theatre* anthology series, whose inventive style was exemplified by the notorious mockumentary, *Forgotten Silver*. While conditions still permitted experimentation, innovation and diversity, it was in the hour-long drama series form that the most serious

repercussions of aggressive competition between TVNZ and TV3 were initially felt. Although TVNZ examples *Marlin Bay* and *Plainclothes* both rated well in the early 1990s, two equally proficient mid-1990s examples, *City Life* (TV2) and *Cover Story* (TV3), did not. It became clear to NZ On Air, to the networks, and to leading producers, that more strategic approaches were needed to sustain local TV drama in general and the hour-long series form in particular.

DRAMA AFTER 2000

From 2000, success for the renewable local drama series was attained by *Street Legal* (TV2) whose greater popularity than its most recent local predecessors saw it outlast these to achieve four seasons. With networks still smarting from the ratings failure of *City Life* and *Cover Story*, later timeslots (9.30-10.30 pm) were opened to local series dramas as a way to protect them from the consequences of aggressive head-to-head competition with leading 'new season' imported dramas. Although anthology-packaged one-off dramas were generally considered to be too high-risk by this point, there was one very innovative and successful example in the Maori 'ghost story' series, *Mataku*. This became sufficiently popular in 2002-03 that when TV3, its original broadcaster, hesitated about renewing it, TVNZ took it over, commissioning a third *Mataku* series for TV One.

With NZ On Air, the networks and drama-makers all finding ways to respond better to these challenges as competition intensified, the first half of this decade was characterised by higher, more consistent ratings for local renewable drama series. Following hard on the heels of the successful *Street Legal* (2000-03), for example, was TV One's *Mercy Peak* (2001-04), the popularity of which justified four seasons of episodes.

After 2003, assisted by the longevity and quality of *Mercy Peak*, the fortunes of hour-long drama series took a positive turn. Within the industry, this is attributed to a decision, arrived at by NZ On Air and the networks together, to consciously avoid creating new drama concepts in areas that are already well-served by imported dramas, namely "cops and docs" formats. This helped generate a new focus on conceptual inventiveness; on thinking 'outside the [procedural] box'. This change saw the creation of some genuinely

exciting drama concepts, yielding some significant successes in hour-long locally-produced series and serials. Some of these were quality serials, including *The Insider's Guide to Happiness*, its prequel *The Insider's Guide to Love*, *The Cult*, and *This is Not My Life*. Located at the high end of the range for local dramas, all of these programmes were characterised by conceptual and aesthetic innovation. While not all of them rated as highly as *The Insider's Guide to Happiness* and *This is Not My Life* as the two leading examples, these serials all elicited a favourable critical response.

DRAMA SINCE 2005: SERIES AND SERIALS

Today, as ratings figures, blogs, and anecdotal evidence all suggest, local TV drama is achieving new heights of popularity. In addition to NZ On Air's own efforts, important facilitators of this positive turn have included increased confidence and support from network executives along with the accumulated expertise of leading 'key creative' personnel as to how to entice viewers to local drama in television's now intensely competitive environment. With NZ On Air and networks continuing to place a high value on conceptual innovation and 'localness', the impression being created for viewers is that local drama can not only offer them relevant stories which reflect their country, society and culture, but also bring something unique in terms of its idiosyncratic concepts and characters as well as a quirky 'Kiwi' style.

In recent years, the one drama series that has been most strongly indicative of all these qualities has been *Outrageous Fortune* (TV3). Blending family melodrama with generous infusions of laugh-out loud comedy, *Outrageous Fortune* told the story of the Wests, an extended West Auckland family that is held together by its plain-speaking matriarch, Cheryl. Having attained a grand total of 108 hours of programming and six seasons, *Outrageous Fortune* holds the distinction of being the most enduring and popular drama series that New Zealand has ever produced. Another example has been *Go Girls* (TV2), whose fourth season is due to air in 2012. The conceptual innovation of these and other hour-long dramas, to which we can add the inventive serials *This is Not My Life* and *The Almighty Johnsons*, has been underscored by the attractiveness of their

concepts and narratives to major networks in the USA and UK, who have purchased the format rights to some of these shows.

Important to sustaining the momentum that series drama has achieved via the unprecedented success of *Outrageous Fortune* has been a continuity of production activity. While the continuity of *Shortland Street* is considered vital to maintaining the lower layer of TV drama's production industry pyramid, the continuity of production in hour-long drama series has evidently strengthened the middle and upper layers of this same pyramid. The flow-on impacts are strongly exemplified in the area of drama writing. Precisely because it ran for four seasons, *Mercy Peak* (2001-04) allowed a new generation of writers to practice their craft and extend their expertise.

With some of these writers then moving directly on to *Outrageous Fortune* (2005-10), their now extensive experience has not only been important in facilitating the outstanding success of *Outrageous Fortune* but has also made it possible for this to be achieved by one or more of the drama series successors to *Outrageous Fortune*. Important to the potential for this writing expertise to flow between these series, is that all have been produced by South Pacific Pictures, allowing this one company (which also produces *Shortland Street*) to become an unparalleled 'training ground' in long-form drama production, the area of drama whose success and stability has always delivered benefits to the quality and reception of the local TV drama category as a whole.

An important achievement and a major milestone in 22 years of NZ On Air, is that the year 2011 has been the first in which a local drama series has aired on all three of New Zealand's leading free-to-air channels. The dramas were *Nothing Trivial* (TV One), *Go Girls* (TV2), and *The Almighty Johnsons* (TV3). Underscoring the above claims about the attainment of an unusual level of popularity for the renewable drama series, these three programmes have also rated successfully, ensuring their return in 2012.

DRAMA AND THE PLATINUM FUND: TELEFEATURES

A final trend in local TV drama in recent years, and one that was facilitated by the 2009 creation of the Platinum Fund, has been NZ On Air's creation of funding opportunities for telefeatures, feature-length one-offs. As with 'innovation' initiatives in comedy and children's drama and the historic example of *Shortland Street*, the revival of local telefeatures offers another successful example of NZ On Air's ongoing efforts to identify gaps in the broadcast schedules and to fill them by offering contestable funding opportunities. By contrast with the ongoing 'flagship' role of the continuing soap and renewable drama series, these telefeatures function as an 'event-oriented' viewing experience.

With their higher budgets facilitating cinematic aesthetics and storytelling, these telefeatures also differ from earlier examples, some of which were produced as pilots for potential new drama series. Hence their innovation, as quality feature-length dramas, has been to extend the potential of 'national cinema' into television, in a way that is similar to the approach of the fledgling British Channel 4, whose 1982 commissioning of quality feature-length dramas for its Film on Four slot enlivened British cinema as well as taking one-off drama in a new direction on British television (Ansorge, 1997: 99-101).

As telefeatures, these also have the advantage of an expanded narrative space for the telling of unique and culturally significant stories. An ideal 'home' for such dramas, as one in which they have also connected directly with the 25-54 demographic for which they were created, has been Sunday evening (8.30-10.30pm) on TV One. This has operated as a 'prestige' drama slot for many decades, yet one in which only a select few local drama productions have ever screened. When the four most recent telefeatures – *Tangiawai*, *Billy*, *Bliss* and *Rage* – aired in 2011 all of them garnered successful ratings and favourable reviews, these outcomes echoing the achievements of the 2009 telefeatures, *Bloodlines*, *Piece of My Heart*, *Until Proven Innocent* and *Stolen*.

CHANGING COST DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN IMPORTED AND LOCAL PRODUCT

An important consequence of New Zealand TV's small market size is that the cost differentials between importing foreign dramas and comedies and producing local examples are far more marked than in larger national markets. The expense and commercial risk of commissioning a local programme as against the cheaper and risk-averse alternative of purchasing a demonstrably popular product from overseas can be seen in the traditional price differential for hour-long drama formats. As Roger Horrocks (2004: 272-3) explained:

[A] one-hour episode of a popular American or British drama series that has cost, say, \$3,000,000 to make will be available for \$25,000... New Zealand primetime drama will be made on a much lower budget – say, for \$500,000 per hour – but this is still twenty times more expensive than buying an overseas product.

In any national TV market, the acquisition cost of a 'new season' American drama or comedy is indexed to the size of the potential audience and thus the likely level of commercial revenue to be generated. In Britain for example (a market of roughly 62 million people), the episode cost of acquiring a leading 'new season' American drama can be much closer to its original production cost (Wooten, 2006: 1). Yet, for New Zealand buyers, the same 'new season' product has traditionally been comparatively low, reflecting the more limited profitability for a given broadcast in a national market of fewer than 5 million people.

Outside sports programming, traditional price differentials between local and imported content seemed to alter relatively little during the 1990s. However, the change has been more marked since 2005, one impact of an unfolding era of multi-platform digital 'plenty' for New Zealand television, led by pay TV network Sky. The overseas experience of the intense competition that has been unleashed by digital 'plenty' suggests that acquisition prices for 'premium' content have risen in line with the number of channels competing for such content. The greater profitability of Sky, compared to the free-to-air networks, has positioned the former to set acquisition prices in the

many cases where Sky-owned and free-to-air channels compete for 'must-have' imported programmes. A vivid demonstration of the current and unfolding impacts was seen in 2011 when the popular BBC serial *Downton Abbey* aired on the Sky-owned Prime rather than on TV One. Evidently competitive bidding had escalated its acquisition price beyond the reach of TVNZ.

With TVNZ and TV3 reconciling the costs of their import acquisitions against their investments in local drama and comedy, the latter have become more difficult to afford. As Rick Friesen, former managing director of TV3, explained: "If we have to pay NZ\$8 million more for a foreign [show] that we have to have, because the success of our network depends on that product, we have to cut that money from somewhere else. And local programming is the next biggest item" (Harvey, 2006: 10). The corollary to TVNZ and TV3's increasing investment in 'premium' imported dramas and comedies is a higher level of dependence on NZ On Air funding contributions for their local content commissions. Although the impacts of rising acquisition prices have not yet been fully felt in New Zealand, as the networks' dependence on NZ On Air funding increases, annual levels of new drama and comedy hours are vulnerable to possible reduction in the future, unless NZ On Air budgets can be increased to compensate for the broader changes outlined above.

ADVERTISER IMPERATIVES AND THE 'OPPORTUNITY COST' OF LOCAL DRAMA AND COMEDY

The above cost differences have the greatest impact in the case of programming purchased or produced for prime time slots. Traditionally and internationally, advertising revenue has been generated by the number of viewers figuring in quarter-hour ratings. However, in the last 22 years and indicatively in markets like the USA, where advertisers have needed to adapt to an environment of continuing channel proliferation and consequent audience fragmentation, there has long been a greater interest in audience 'quality' as opposed to sheer volume, this providing a way to compensate networks, in revenue terms, for declining audience mass for their individual channels.

While prime time slots bring opportunities to maximise the advertising revenue being earned, this opportunity is also attended by increased pressure to offer programmes of a 'high production value' type which have the capacity either to maximise viewers 'by the numbers' or deliver the 'quality' audience segments for which advertisers are willing to pay more (see Dunleavy, 2009: 141). Both of these pressures combine to 'raise the stakes' on network decisions about what TV programmes it is possible to place in prime time hours. Although the pursuit of 'quality' audiences has been less influential in New Zealand due to the limited capacity in such a small market for niche-oriented schedules and revenues, its presence is nonetheless felt in the emphasis on the 18-49 demographic of most prime time programming produced or purchased for TV One, TV2 and TV3.

With prime time slots being regarded as significant pressure points in the daily schedule because channel audiences reach their largest potential size, the advertiser-funded TVNZ and TV3 are obliged to maximise the advertising revenue they can earn through the strategic placement of high-rating programmes in prime time slots. The 'opportunity cost' that these networks incur with regard to New Zealand-produced drama and comedy, is that a new local programme, in stark contrast to either returning or even 'new season' American products in these categories, is entirely untested. Hence the 'opportunity' that TVNZ and TV3 both forgo when they place an untested local drama or comedy in a peak viewing slot is the potential for lost advertising revenue. Underlining the commercial risks of scheduling local drama, one network commissioning executive asserted that:

The harsh reality is that NZ On Air needs to be in the business of getting New Zealand dramas on air and we support [them] in that aim as well as the commercial reality allows us. The truth is that we are at the edge in terms of what is commercially viable for us – and in truth we don't need it. CSI costs us a fraction of the cost and gets us a 20 share.

Cited in Murray 2010: 12

Even when a local drama or comedy proves a hit with viewers, the advertising revenue that is earned per hour is several times less than the per episode production cost. In 2010, for example, two hour-long local dramas, both of them popular with viewers, aired on one of the above networks in 'peak' 8.30-9.30 pm slots – *Go Girls* (TV2) and *Outrageous Fortune* (TV3). Buoyed up by their higher audience numbers than might be available for later slots, the episodes for these local TV dramas earned what has been estimated at \$124,995 and \$180,622 per commercial hour (Murray, 2010: 12). This is considerably less than the production budgets for these programmes, which are more than \$500,000 per hour.

Increasing competition in New Zealand television has made local dramas and comedies potentially invaluable contributors to channel 'branding'. It is for this reason that TV3 has continued to commission programmes in these categories, even though this has been a difficult decision in periods of financial pressure.

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL INVESTMENTS IN LOCAL DRAMA AND COMEDY

Given these economic pressures, broadcaster contributions to the costs of local drama and comedy have centred on their payment of the 'licence fee' in exchange for which they receive exclusive rights to air these programmes and use them for channel branding purposes. Again drama, specifically the hour-long series and serial formats that are prevalent in key primetime slots, provides an indicative example. Positioned above the figure that TV One, TV2, and TV3 are likely to pay for a 'new season' American or British imported drama episode, the licence fee per episode that these broadcasters will pay for a local drama is estimated to be from \$60,000-80,000 (Barnett, 2011).

Although it seems clear that the networks will not invest more in local drama and comedy than the current licence fee, other opportunities for additional commercial investment in these categories need to be considered given the multi-platform environment in which New Zealand television now operates. In other countries whose market conditions make it difficult to fund local content (Canada and Denmark

being two examples) regulatory requirements exist for subscription-funded platforms which deliver and derive commercial benefits from screening first-run local content. In Canada, for example, 'must-pay' rules make it a requirement for subscription providers to "contribute at least 5 per cent" of their gross annual revenues to Canadian local content (MCH 2008).

In New Zealand the absence of 'must-pay' rules for costly first-run local content that is delivered through the pay TV platform places the burden of investment and risk in these programmes entirely on NZ On Air and the free-to-air networks. Given the current pattern of rising profitability for Sky and declining profitability for these networks, as well as the likelihood that other subscription-funded TV providers and services will be added to New Zealand's system once ultra-fast broadband has been fully established, there should at least be consideration of such rules for New Zealand.

NZ ON AIR STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL DRAMA AND COMEDY

It is an agency that is supportive of the independent industry. And importantly, NZ On Air has a precise and transparent set of principles to which it must adhere, and to which it can be held to account – unlike the networks, which are subject to changes in fashion, ratings wars, commercial pressures, and changes in government policy.

Harris J, cited in Onfilm 2009

Harris's assertions highlight what are the most important advantages of NZ On Air's existence and model relative to other organisational options for allocating public funding to vulnerable forms of TV production. Moreover, the 'NZ On Air model' works particularly well for the unusually expensive and risky categories of drama and comedy. Given NZ On Air's central remit to "reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture", outcomes in local drama and comedy have been critical performance indicators for it for two main reasons. One is the particular capacity that local dramas and comedies have shown to foster a sense of 'cultural identity' while simultaneously helping to defeat 'cultural cringe'. The other is that, together, drama and comedy consume by far the largest proportion of annual NZ On Air spending. For example, NZ On Air's total television budget for 2011

(including the Platinum Fund) was \$83.7 million, of which drama and comedy programmes consumed just over \$38 million (NZ On Air 2010/2011: 46-49). The next section will outline some specific NZ On Air strategies which have helped to shape the kinds of TV dramas and comedies produced through this period

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

An important strategy for NZ On Air in drama and comedy has been the allocation of funding for the development of new programme ideas and projects. Involving close consultation and a 50/50 split of the costs with the host network for a given TV project, the development process begins with the collection of programme ideas and culminates in the identification of those projects considered to be the strongest, which then receive NZ On Air investment to enter production. Underlining the economic rationale for NZ On Air's co-funding of development, Glenn Usmar registered that "it's the only way you can get an outcome in drama and comedy because without development you don't have enough material to make a six or seven million dollar decision" (Usmar 2011).

During the 1990s, NZ On Air's tendency, as the previous Television Manager Neil Cairns observed, was to "develop a small number of projects with a correspondingly high proportion going into production" (Cairns 2000: 5). However, as was revealed by 2000, this approach led to an over-reliance on too narrow a range of productions with no reservoir of alternative project options should any of those developed to an advanced stage 'fall over' for some reason.

Accordingly, NZ On Air's development policy was revised in 2000 so as to create a larger pool of project ideas from which, in consultation with networks, those that have shown the strongest potential can be selected. The aim of this revised policy, as Cairns (2000: 5) put it, was to give "a greater variety of 'good ideas' the opportunity to see if they can fly".

This change was a conscious effort by NZ On Air to deploy its development funding to maximise the efficacy of its production investments. An important impact of this change in development policy has evidently been that more of the programmes have succeeded in ratings terms, with qualitative indicators suggesting that NZ On Air-funded dramas and comedies are proving popular with a larger number and wider range of viewers (see NZ On Air Public Perception Research Report 2010).

THE FACILITATION OF CREATIVE INNOVATION

A second strategy, helping to maximise the cultural benefits, quality, and progressiveness of local drama and comedy, has been NZ On Air's encouragement of creative innovation. NZ On Air has done this in several ways. One is through project development as outlined above. Another has been through the criteria it uses to assess and rank the proposals it receives in these categories which, rather than being fixed, are able to respond to changing institutional, socio-cultural, and audience reception conditions.

A third approach, which has evidently stimulated innovation and more diversity in drama and comedy, has been NZ On Air's conducting of gap analysis research, aiming to identify what might be missing from the existing supply of local drama and comedy. Given the higher production costs of these categories, there are obvious limits on the potential range of programmes that it is possible to develop in response. However if we consider the entire 22 years of NZ On Air's existence, there have been successive instances where NZ On Air gap analysis research has reacted to an evident need to effect very positive change for viewers. The inception of *Shortland Street*, for example, was the consequence of research conducted by NZ On Air from 1990-91. This research showed that local teenagers (the 14-24s) watched a high volume of foreign, mainly Australian, soap opera and, partly because of the complete absence of any local soap example, were apt to cringe at the sound of New Zealand accents, preferring to hear American or Australian ones instead (Loughnan 1993).

CONSULTATION WITH THE PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

Although NZ On Air has neither the resources, nor any statutory obligation, to actively support New Zealand's TV production industry, the agency has achieved positive industry change in indirect ways. By identifying gaps in the existing supply of local drama comedy and targeting funding to entice producers to respond with proposals, NZ On Air has provided an important stimulus for the development of industry expertise in new areas of drama and comedy production. One example, in addition to those mentioned above, was the symposia it held in support of these programme categories in 2005, a year that has emerged as a positive turning point for both categories. While various factors combined to produce this positive turn for drama and comedy, the two symposia evidently helped to generate additional momentum and to do so at an opportune moment. The organisation of these symposia and the industry's support of them were a clear demonstration that, at times when NZ On Air perceives a pressing need for broader industry discussion and consultation, it is able to gather together network commissioning executives and programmers, along with producers, directors, writers, and researchers for a productive and potentially 'game-changing' analysis of current problems, opportunities, and possible new directions for programme creation.

RESEARCH INTO AUDIENCE RESPONSES

Augmenting and sometimes precipitating gap analysis work has been NZ On Air's ongoing research into audience responses to NZ On Air-funded programmes. Important examples for these categories have been *Attitudes to Television and Radio Comedy and Drama Programming* (2004) and the annual *NZ On Air Public Perception Research*. As well as revealing how different audience groups are responding to existing NZ On Air-funded programmes, audience research has also been important in revealing areas for future focus and innovation. As a qualitative study in which drama and comedy were the focus, the 2004 Attitudes report provides an indicative example. As noted in NZ On Air's ensuing *Annual Report* (2005: 4), this research found an audience perception of local TV drama "as world-class" and that, while local comedy is considered by viewers to have improved, "it still needs to do better".

This finding about comedy prompted two important responses from NZ On Air. One was its organisation of a one-day symposium on comedy in 2005 and the other was the launch of a three-year ‘innovation’ initiative (2005-07) to which new forms of comedy were central. Although the innovation initiative was broader than comedy, the programmes emerging from it included *The Pretender* (the first local example of comedy verité), *A Thousand Apologies*, (the first sitcom to examine New Zealand’s Asian cultures), and *The Jaquie Brown Diaries* (a single-camera sitcom) which emerged as one of the most popular local comedies in recent years.

KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE NZ ON AIR MODEL

The above exploration of key strategies in NZ On Air’s work offers further evidence of the effectiveness of the NZ On Air model to the sustaining of local drama and comedy in a context of limited public funding to which high performance expectations are attached, of channel proliferation, aggressive competition, and a degree of audience fragmentation. Having survived for 22 years by virtue of public funding through NZ On Air, local TV dramas and comedies are demonstrating increasing importance to New Zealand viewers in a digital TV environment over which imported programmes continue to preside.

Favourable responses to NZ On Air-funded dramas and comedies have been evident not only in the ratings and other mainstream media outlets, but also in the findings of additional qualitative audience response surveys. The resounding success and national ‘buzz’ that *Outrageous Fortune* and *bro’Town* achieved, for example, underline that even in an environment of unprecedented programme ‘plenty’ in which there are fewer limits on audience ‘choice’ than ever before, local dramas and comedies, unique in their reflection of idiosyncratically New Zealand perspectives and experience, can be valued extremely highly by viewers.

The economic considerations and challenges outlined in this chapter affirm that advertising revenue can neither amortise broadcaster investment in local dramas and comedies nor can it ameliorate the significant commercial risks of placing these programmes in primetime slots. Accordingly, and as a vital means to entice broadcast networks into placing a local drama or comedy in primetime, the gap between what such a programme costs to make and what a network can earn in advertising revenue through screening it, has been filled by NZ On Air, with the agency funding a majority of production costs since 1989. Augmenting this assertion is that the NZ On Air proportion of the production costs in these categories has also risen since the early 1990s, now averaging 75-80 per cent for many productions. Finally it is important to underline that outcomes in these categories are limited neither by the willingness of networks to air the programmes nor by the degree of enthusiasm with which viewers consume them, but most definitively by the amount of public funding that is made available to support them.

With *Outrageous Fortune* having run for six seasons, *bro’Town* for five, and a fourth season of *Go Girls* in production in 2011, a longstanding limitation of NZ On Air’s funding model, as this applies to drama and comedy categories, is too little financial resourcing to maintain successful programmes, at the same time as meeting the vital task of creating new programmes. Emphatically in TV drama and comedy, there needs to be room for experimentation and failure, and ratings performance can never be predicted in advance of broadcast.

When NZ On Air was first conceived in 1988, it was anticipated that these and other local content forms could survive within a limit of 50 per cent public funding, would attract 30 per cent of their total cost from networks or private investors, and only “occasionally” require as much as 70 per cent public funding. This was also seen as the maximum NZ On Air investment in any one project (Officials Report, 1988: 59). The envisaged scenario was one in which few local programme categories or forms would require public funding beyond their first season and that successful programmes would naturally attract sufficient private investment. However, as the experience of the last 22 years has revealed, drama and comedy programmes require more than 70 per cent public funding and

private investment in these forms has not exceeded, let alone routinely reached, 30 per cent of their cost. Additionally, it is clear that even outstanding ratings success does not remove, or even reduce, this level of financial reliance on NZ On Air funding by a returning drama or comedy programme.

Accordingly, the next review of NZ On Air's television budget needs to address the challenges of how to provide longer-term support to successful returning dramas or comedies so that these can continue (if this is desired by all relevant parties) without reducing the opportunities to develop, create and test new drama and comedy programmes. As things stand, NZ On Air is obliged to reconcile one set of needs against the other, as an ongoing strategic challenge.

In view of the significant 'opportunity cost' being incurred by the free-to-air networks in New Zealand's aggressively competitive TV environment, this chapter has suggested that when local drama and comedy programmes air on pay platforms a small levy on revenues for such platforms could be considered for New Zealand, particularly in view of the success of such measures in other countries where local TV content is commercially vulnerable. If implemented, such a levy could yield an additional source of private funding to further support the production costs of local content, as it does in Canada. A levy of this kind could become more important as rising prices for premium imported dramas and comedies impact further on the ability of the free-to-air networks to invest in local programmes.

To date, intense inter-network competition in New Zealand's unusually deregulated and unusually small TV market has left local drama and comedy very highly reliant on public investment to facilitate their production. An important consequence of their reliance on public funding, however, is that fewer dramas and comedies can be funded each year than might otherwise be produced if funding were not so limited. Importantly this limited output places significant performance pressure on the drama and comedy programmes that are produced, this leaving too little room for experimentation or ratings failure.

Such a high degree of reliance on public funding leaves local drama and comedy extremely vulnerable to any change that might reduce NZ On Air's ability to invest in them. It means that if, for any reason, NZ On Air does not remain the majority funder of local drama and comedy, or if demands on NZ On Air's general budget were to diminish its proportionate contribution to their production costs, local TV drama and comedy programmes, along with their demonstrated and very positive contributions to 'cultural identity', would likely cease to exist.

CHAPTER 9

THE THREATENED GENRES
– DOCUMENTARIES

When we ask “what kinds of documentary should be the priority?” the main complication has always been the basic difference between a broadcaster’s view and that of NZ On Air. As a commercial enterprise the broadcaster has to ask: “what will make the most money for us?” whereas NZ On Air is required to “reflect and develop New Zealand culture and identity.”

Horrocks 2003

We don’t want to make spinach television – you should watch this because it will do you good. We want documentaries that the audience want to watch, because they are entertained and informed.

Steven 2010

INTRODUCTION

The term documentary has many definitions – it will suffice here to say that it embraces many forms, from heavyweight didactic offerings with a voice of God narrator, to fly-on-the-wall observational programmes with no commentary, or “constructed reality” shows. Documentaries come in many styles – auteur led, director driven, investigative or people simply describing their lives. Ideally documentaries should tell a good story, or expose an issue clearly and they should be factually accurate. It is hard to better Grierson’s definition that documentary is the “creative treatment of actuality”.

Public opinion surveys have consistently found that documentary programmes are the most watched and most enjoyed of the programmes funded by NZ On Air. If there were additional funding, the most popular way to spend this funding would be on New Zealand documentaries (NZ On Air 2009).

The documentary genre has an obvious cultural role in ensuring that a variety of New Zealand stories are made available to a mass audience. Indeed the role of the documentary can be seen as crucial to civil society. As a research study in 2008 expressed it:

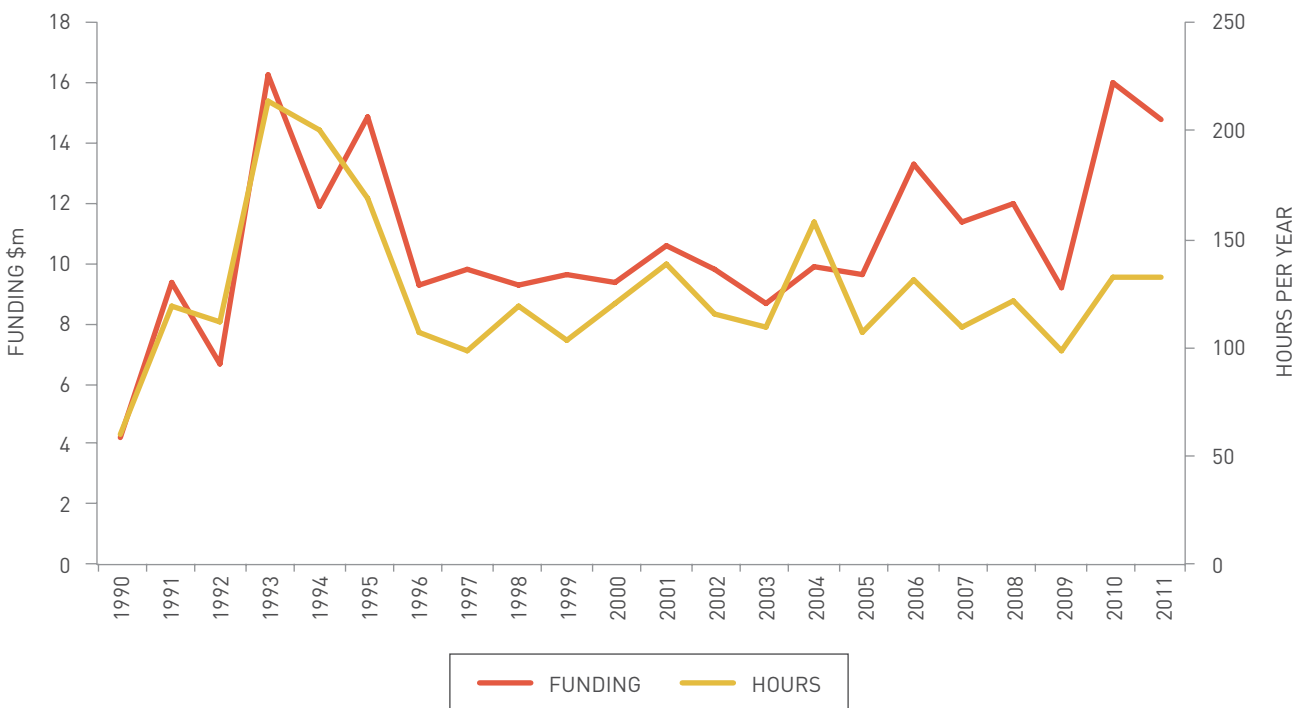
Documentaries track New Zealand’s social development. They play an important part in preserving our history and commenting on our present. They are also a key part of the democratic process, promoting new information, exposing viewers to new ideas and encouraging debate.

Creative New Zealand 2008

Documentary and drama were the two genres specified in the Broadcasting Act as requiring NZ On Air to make “reasonable provision” to assist in their production. Accordingly NZ On Air funded 60 hours of documentary in its first year, but expanded this figure rapidly to 214 hours by 1993. Not only was documentary relatively cheap and easy to make but it seemed that there was a certain common interest between the funder and the broadcasters in promoting this genre.

The following graph illustrates the pattern of funding and hours through the period.

FIG 5 DOCUMENTARY FUNDING AND HOURS 1990-2011



Source: NZ On Air Annual Reports 1990 -2011

Note the expansion in the years 1993 to 1995, before falling back in 1996 (see below). The 1993 level of \$16.3m funding 214 hours has not been matched since. The increase in funding in 2010 and 2011 reflects additional spending from the Platinum Fund. Note too that funding levels per hour have increased since 2006.

In the early years some programmes were funded that would be unlikely to receive funding today. The current affairs magazine *60 Minutes* was TV3's highest rating programme in 1990 and was described by NZ On Air as the only regular vehicle for prime time New Zealand documentaries. It was effectively bulk-funded in the first year of NZ On Air's operation, to the tune of \$500,000 for 26 slots of 20 minutes – the most expensive documentary project at that time. Reviewing the topics covered by *60 Minutes* in 1990, NZ On Air

found them "impressive" and meeting such key criteria as covering ethnic and other minorities and the arts. *60 Minutes* was funded for another two years before funding was discontinued. Arguably these 20 minute items are more accurately described as current affairs magazine items rather than true documentary.

THE GROWTH OF POPULAR DOCUMENTARY

A significant element of the expansion stemmed from an initiative of Geoff Steven, commissioning editor at TV3. He saw the opportunity to create a documentary strand for the channel in prime time, under the brand *Inside New Zealand*. He sought bulk funding for 30 programmes, and received funding for 10 titles in 1991.

He believed that TVNZ's style of documentaries was boring and was determined to revive a moribund genre. Within the strand he sought a range of topics and styles, but all had to be entertaining, relevant and interesting to New Zealanders. Among the subjects for notable early *Inside New Zealand* documentaries were Muldoon, the Wahine and Erebus disasters, Marae Justice and motor-cycle designer John Britten.

After several years at TV3, Steven was lured to TVNZ in 1997, where he established another mainstream strand *Documentary New Zealand*, also in prime time. It replaced TVNZ's *Tuesday Documentary*, and ran till 2005.

The result was the growth of mainstream or popular documentary. Roger Horrocks has suggested that this sub-genre has the following characteristics:

- The search for a broad audience
- A consistent effort to be accessible
- An emphasis on personal stories, preferably with elements of emotion and drama
- An emotional tone that encouraged viewers to get involved
- A desire to make the subject matter relevant to the average viewer
- A brisk pace and a conscious awareness of ad breaks
- An attempt to show rather than tell
- The ability to make the most of a lean budget
- It must be promotable

Horrocks 2003

This heady mix proved remarkably successful, with positive reaction from audiences. As a consequence New Zealand was screening many more documentaries in prime time than most other countries.

THE INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION SECTOR

Part of the reason for the genre's success was the unleashing of energy in the independent sector. In line with its new commercial status, TVNZ had disbanded both its in-house drama and documentary departments and TV3 had no such in-house resources. Documentaries were to be out-sourced to the independents, who included a range of companies of varying sizes and levels of professional competence, all pitching their bids for a slice of the contestable funding.

The early years saw multiple series of a number of successful programmes, including *Magic Kiwis* (two series), *Heartland* (four series), *Heroes* (four series) and *Living Earth* (four series). There were also four series of *First Hand*, a low budget strand for first time film makers using light-weight gear. *Country Calendar*, the long-established TVNZ programme, was part-funded from 1991 right through to the time of this report.

A major achievement was in the area of arts documentaries. *The Work of Art* series screened some forty programmes in the period 1993 to 1999, on TV One on Sunday nights starting at 9.30 or 10. Horrocks describes this series as documenting the arts "with a depth unknown before or since. The series was also a showcase for some of the most innovative documentary-making on New Zealand television" (Horrocks 2003). Many of New Zealand's leading cultural figures were featured, including Janet Frame, Peter Peryer, Len Lye and James K Baxter. The programmes were made by a number of different directors and production companies.

It should be noted that NZ On Air was funding only a proportion of the budgets for documentaries, varying from 50% in 1994 to 71% in 1996. Much of the remainder was expected to come from the broadcasters, in the form of a licence fee and an equity investment, and a few documentaries had part funding from other sources. NZ On Air decided early on that it would set a maximum figure, that it would contribute no more than \$100,000 to any one documentary. This was regarded as a high level of subsidy, but it was said to reflect the low level of commerciality of the genre. Given the popularity of the mainstream documentaries, this could be seen as open to question.

Indeed the expansion of hours of documentaries, and their ratings appeal for the broadcasters, led NZ On Air to question their funding of them:

After about 6 or 7 years NZ On Air began to say why are we still funding documentaries? Or rather why are we still putting such a large subsidy into these? There was a moment when it looked as if NZ On Air could say we have created a secure environment for documentaries, particularly prime time documentaries, we are out of here and will move onto something else.... But the trouble was that the programmers never quite believed in documentaries.... So anyway rightly or wrongly, documentaries finally became an endangered species and NZ On Air lost the opportunity to pull out.

Horrocks 2010 (a)

ATTITUDE OF THE BROADCASTERS

For whatever reason, by the mid-nineties the broadcasters were losing their appetite for documentaries. In TVNZ's case, this can be attributed to the drive to prepare TVNZ for sale and so to focus intently on improving commercial performance. In 1996 TVNZ said it wanted no more arts documentaries, preferring to opt for magazine-style arts programmes. But the retraction in commissioning was felt across the genre as a whole. Indeed TVNZ announced it had "too many documentaries" (Horrocks 2003).

Both the broadcasters and NZ On Air were also coming under attack for the narrowing of the range of documentary content. From inside NZ On Air, Roger Horrocks regularly drew attention to shortcomings across the genre (see above p 19). As early as 1992 he could foresee a worrying trend:

New Zealand has a rich tradition of documentary making, but now only one type of documentary is acceptable in prime time – it must have a single human interest story at the centre and it must be emotional. Hence sex and death are the usual topics, or a real tear-jerker.... To reach prime time every programme must conform to the broadcaster's cautious ideas about what the mass audience wants and how it should be packaged.

Horrocks 1992

Others observed the tendency to a tabloid approach and trivialisation, partly from the use of non-expert but celebrity presenters, for branding purposes. One academic noted that in 1998 there were 10 documentaries fronted by well-known personalities.

Seven of these were comedians who fronted what threatened to become a new sub-genre, comedians driving around the country chatting to the camera and local characters, a hybrid "road-movie/buddy-movie/stand-up comedy" routine. Narration was replaced with repartee, the presenter as authority or witness replaced with the presenter as entertainer, and subject matter subsequently trivialised.

Debrett 2004

DOUBTS AND CONCERNS

In 2002, the concerns of many of the documentary makers were articulated in an article in *The Listener* by Peter Calder, under the title "More than pies and breasts." This was a reference to titles *Who Ate all the Pies* and *The Naked Breast*, one of a series of populist documentaries that also included *The Naked Penis*, *The Naked Bum* and *The Naked Vagina*, all part-funded by NZ On Air.

These catchy titles masked a serious intent – to make health information more accessible. The producer of the Naked series, Veronica McCarthy, explains the genesis of the first programme:

We wanted to do a documentary on breast cancer, but we didn't want it to be a didactic documentary, a turn-off.... We wanted lightness, a sense of humour, anecdotes to be shared....the subjects we covered in the Naked series were taboo subjects for a lot of people. To be able to put them out there in prime time and have them repeated... we all aim to have our documentaries discussed round the water cooler the next day and I know they were.

McCarthy 2011

For McCarthy, the relationship with the audience was crucial. It was all about the challenge of finding ways to reach out and draw the audience in:

How do you speak to your audience in a way that's much more connected? If you want to call that populist you can, but it's about drawing those people in...the Naked series connected with people from all walks of life, all ages, all incomes, it was extremely successful.

McCarthy 2011

While many in the documentary community were happy to exploit the opportunities offered by the vogue for populism in prime time slots, others bemoaned the lack of certain sub-genres that they saw as not being funded in this new commercially-driven environment, notably documentaries on historical or biographical subjects, those on political or contentious topics or well-researched investigative documentaries.

Was this fair comment, or simply grouching from the old guard who had not kept up with the changed environment? The evidence is that, while the new mainstream documentary enjoyed the limelight, there were also some documentaries produced that did cover the above sub-genres. In addition to *The New Zealand Wars* mentioned above (p 26), historical topics included *Revolution* (1996), *Frontier of Dreams* (2003-4), and *Our People Our Century* (2000). The Maori documentary quota ensured a steady flow of documentaries on Maori topics (see p 27), and there was also the notable *Feathers of Peace* (2000), on the extermination of the Moriori on the Chatham Islands. New Zealand's increasingly multi-cultural make-up was reflected in the series *Immigrant Nation* (1994-6). Mention has already been made of the outstanding *Work Of Art* series (p 61). There were even a few examples of in-depth investigative documentary, such as *Cave Creek* (1998) or *The Remand of Ivan Curry* (1991).

A perspective on the balance between the earlier documentary tradition and the new popular style can be illustrated by looking at the development of one documentary maker. George Andrews was certainly in the tradition of the old guard – he had been employed in TVNZ's documentary unit for many years and was responsible for the historic *Landmarks* series (1981). He did not value the new style introduced by Geoff Steven.

I had come out of an NZBC tradition... where you actually had a mind applied to documentary and documentary meant thoughtful considered kind of ideas documentaries.... For me Geoff's great new world didn't conform with what I had been making under the old regime. I didn't think it was an improvement. I didn't think it was any new dawn. It was kind of ground zero experience for New Zealand broadcasting.

Andrews 2010

Despite this antipathy to the new world, Andrews managed to persuade NZ On Air to fund, and the broadcasters to screen, a number of documentaries that he wanted to make. These included *Nuclear Reaction*, examining New Zealand's nuclear policy 1945-95; *The Game of Our Lives*, a four-part series on rugby as social history; *Motor Mania*, a two-part series on the New Zealand motor industry; and *Out of the Dark*, on how the police used DNA to catch the country's most notorious serial rapist.

But Andrews also had a number of proposals turned down, some by the broadcasters, some by NZ On Air, including a number of what he accepted were "lofty" or "ambitious" Maori and Pacific projects. But he persevered and in later years one of his earlier proposals morphed into *Made in Taiwan* which took Oscar Kightley and Nathan Rarere back to their "roots" in Asia.

What this suggests is that some traditional documentary makers managed to adapt and survive under the new regime, and also that there was an overall mix, however imbalanced, between the new popular and the more serious or traditional.

It is worth noting that Andrews found that there were other sources of funding for some ideas. He turned to the Legal Services Board for funding for programmes on the Waitangi Tribunal, award-winning programmes that were not screened on television. The universities of California and Massey funded his documentary on New Zealand geneticist Alan Wilson, screened not on free-to-air but on the Documentary Channel. He also gained funding from Maori TV and Te Mangai Paho to help young Maori creatives make programmes about other countries, such as China (*Kia Ora Nihao*) or Chile (*Kia Ora Ole*). As Andrews reflects:

So I find ways... but what is interesting is that NZ On Air features less and less. I remain interested in them, they are innovative, they sustain me and give me income, but because of the elephant in the room I find it more creative and rewarding to avoid NZ On Air.

Andrews 2010

For Andrews the elephant in the room was the necessary approval of the commercially-driven broadcasters for any project. This theme underlaid many of the voices of dissent to the system.

These dissenters were encouraged by NZ On Air to articulate their concerns as preparation for a Documentary Symposium in 2003. Among the issues raised were the need for development funding, more research, and more serious documentaries rather than what were seen as “voyeurmentaries”. Above all there was dismay at too much sameness and too little diversity, and an overall problem of quality, as summed up frankly by one director/producer:

Too many documentaries are shit. Unimaginative, badly shot, shonkily edited, not thought out, poorly researched, rushed.

NZ On Air 2003

NZ ON AIR STRATEGY

Following the Symposium and further consultation with practitioners, NZ On Air published a Documentary Strategy in October 2003. It proposed a number of changes, among them:

- To increase the budgets for documentaries within the prime time strands, at the same time reducing the numbers of programmes within those strands.
- To seek broadcaster support for an initiative for “blue-chip” or “in-depth” documentaries.
- To seek broadcaster support for a low-cost innovative documentary strand.

On the last point, action was quickly taken. In late 2003 NZ On Air announced that ten low cost documentaries were to be commissioned under the TV2 Documentary Innovation Scheme. These were to be half-hour programmes, funded to a level of \$30,000 each. They included a range of topics, from a profile of Tame Iti to a young woman struggling to kick her P habit. However innovative they may have been, they were consigned to the off-peak wasteland, screening at 11.30pm. These programmes were in addition to the established documentary series on TV2.

It proved harder to make a difference in getting more blue-chip or in-depth documentaries to the screen. But some progress was made, for example in funding biographical programmes about such inspiring New Zealanders as Sister Mary Leo (*Leo's Pride*) or Michael Houston (*Piano Man*). These programmes, both ninety minutes, screened in TVNZ's *New Zealand Festival* slot in 2006.

DISSENT REMAINS

But these occasional successes were not enough to satisfy NZ On Air. Its 2007 Annual Report bewailed that it was “increasingly difficult for producers to secure support for more weighty subject matter screened at an accessible time.” NZ On Air was concerned to discuss with the broadcasters how best to ensure a diversity of documentary production.

For their part many within the production sector maintained a chorus of complaint. In 2007 a series of meetings of documentary makers was convened by Women in Film and Television (WIFT). Organisers reported “strong tensions between the culture of documentary-making and the culture of broadcasting”, resulting in a level of frustration widespread across the community. Part of the problem was seen to be that the selection of topics was being made, not by commissioning editors but by programmers interested only in ratings and advertisers.

In 2008 a research study by Creative New Zealand found that documentary makers saw “a decline in challenging documentaries on the television networks.” Broadcasters had other priorities and it was difficult to sustain long-term careers.

It might be thought that the existence of the TVNZ Charter should have made it easier for NZ On Air to have persuaded TVNZ of the value of the more serious end of the documentary genre. As discussed above (p 31), there were some outstanding examples of quality documentaries in this period, some funded largely by NZ On Air and some by TVNZ through Charter funding, most screened in the New Zealand Festival slot. But this was short-lived and overwhelmed by other developments.

Principal among such developments was the rise of reality TV programmes, such as *What's Really in our Food?*, or *Missing Pieces*, or *The Kitchen Job*, all half hour programmes on TV3. This sub-genre was both cheaper and easier to make than even the more populist documentary. But although they were described as “factual series” they came under documentary in NZ On Air’s funding categories, with the consequence that the more funding was devoted to them, the less was available to traditional documentary.

We are running more popular factual series, but I think that is an evolution... we can't get the same number of viewers to the one-offs as we used to, but the half-hours are very popular.

Woodfield 2010

Missing Pieces was made by Eyeworks, the company founded by Julie Christie with a reputation for many commercially successful formats and programmes. She believes that NZ On Air has realised that such programmes would not be made without NZ On Air support.

They have accepted that documentary can mean factual series and that has made a huge difference as they now fund many successful factual series rather than hour-long conventional documentaries which had lost audience appeal.

Christie 2011

However a question mark remains over such programmes. *Missing Pieces* went into its fourth season in 2011, but with NZ On Air telling Christie that they would be unlikely to fund a fifth series. This may be a crucial test as to whether a broadcaster will be prepared to make the necessary investment, even for a programme judged to be a ratings success.

One producer of mainstream documentaries, the producer of the *Naked* series, argues that popular factual series should not be funded from the documentary fund:

I don't see those as documentaries per se...I don't see them as being about New Zealanders or New Zealanders having their say. There's a need and a place for them, but not out of the documentary fund. We need to hold onto that fund and jealously guard it....I do resent that money being chiselled away...being taken away from harder subjects needing research and preparation.

McCarthy 2011

Documenting those harder subjects remains a concern for the current Chief Executive of NZ On Air Jane Wrightson. She sees a gap in the agency being able to achieve the more serious documentaries, by which she means:

A one-off documentary of the type that is serious and designed to inform and educate....clearly not very popular at the moment... very hard to get them past the broadcasters.

Wrightson 2010

Wrightson notes that the presence of one-off documentaries on prime time mainstream channels is not common internationally.

At a recent documentary conference, I was really surprised to see even ABC and SBS in Australia actively looking for series, not singles. So NZ On Air tries to seize various opportunities. One is the clear interest by Maori Television, with whom we have created the Pakipumeka strand. There have been some fantastic projects funded through that. We also think there is room for us to keep moving in cinema-length documentary features, given the success of directors like Annie Goldson, Gaylene Preston and Leanne Pooley. TV3, in particular, has been pretty supportive of these quite challenging projects, and I think TV One would have been buoyed by the success of the Topp Twins documentary feature.

Wrightson 2011

Certainly NZ On Air has shown itself willing to experiment with new or unusual forms of documentary. *NZ Stories* was a joint commission between TVNZ and NZ On Air in 2010 for a series of 25 half hour documentaries, intended to be people stories that did not fit the prime time strands or would not sustain an hour. These were funded not under documentary but under the Special Interest category, playing on Sunday mornings with no commercial breaks, and replayed on TVNZ 7. While this initiative is to be commended, some of these programmes would have been appreciated by a wider audience. It is worth noting that a considerable amount of documentary output can be found under the Arts and Special Interest categories.

THE PLATINUM FUND

The Platinum Fund (see above p 35), intended for distinctive or quality programmes outside the range normally funded by NZ On Air, has provided an opportunity to support a number of high-end documentary projects. These included *Rivers with Craig Potton* (a series of five one hour programmes) and *Wild Coasts*, another series presented by wildlife photographer Craig Potton. A ninety minute arts documentary, *Canvassing the Treaty*, was funded for Maori Television. Funding has also been committed to an ambitious strand *The Story*, billed as four 60 to 90 minute observational documentaries that will provide special insight and understanding into key institutions charged with delivering social outcomes.

This last project is an interesting example of NZ On Air taking the initiative to achieve its objectives. Working with a broadcaster, in this case TV3, it developed a brief and then put out a request for proposals to the industry. It is also worth noting that the budgets for *The Story*, at more than \$160,000 per hour, are considerably more than for programmes funded under the standard documentary category.

A similar approach was taken for a series of historical docu-dramas. A brief was devised by NZ On Air and then put out to competitive tender. The budgets for this project were also unusually high, at around \$700,000 per ninety minute programme.

The creation of the Platinum Fund, which was a political decision by National's Broadcasting Minister Jonathan Coleman, gave NZ On Air an opportunity to make a difference by funding distinctive programming under the banner of quality, including documentaries. NZ On Air has been proactive and diligent in seizing this opportunity.

CONCLUSION

There are very few countries in the world where a mainstream commercial network plays one-off documentaries.

Woodfield 2010

Sue Woodfield, Head of Factual Production at TV3, is not only echoing Wrightson's point above, she is also paying tribute to her channel's long-running strand *Inside New Zealand*, which has remained in the schedule every year since 1991. Its number of programmes has reduced, from a heyday of 30 per year in the early nineties, down to 9 or 10 by 2010. But that it continues to exist must be seen as evidence of commitment by a commercial broadcaster to the documentary genre, provided that funding support continues from NZ On Air.

TVNZ's commitment is more open to question. The *Documentary New Zealand* strand fell into abeyance in 2006. But perhaps most revealing was TVNZ's turning down of a proposal for a documentary series to celebrate 50 years of television in New Zealand in 2010. Was TVNZ not the natural home for such programmes? The series was eventually made and transmitted on Prime, to considerable critical acclaim. TVNZ chose to mark the milestone with a programme in game show format.

Some observers are far from sanguine on the prospects for the genre. Roger Horrocks believes that the in-depth, prime time documentary is close to an "endangered species."

There are fewer documentaries, the range of possible subjects and approaches has narrowed, and those that still get made are scheduled where few people will see them. Outside of Maori Television, it is obvious that a disaster has occurred.

Horrocks 2010 b

There is no doubt that the range of what NZ On Air will fund under the documentary banner has broadened, principally to include a sub-genre of reality programmes, as noted above. But the issue is how to sustain a balance between the various sub-genres and between the blue-chip and the populist. This issue must continue to exercise NZ On Air. A few high-profile and well-resourced projects under the Platinum Fund are most commendable, but the testing ground must be the choice of topics and styles for the annual documentary round of some \$12 million.

CHAPTER 10

THE THREATENED GENRES – CHILDREN’S

RUTH ZANKER

INTRODUCTION

Children’s television tends to fly under the radar during discussions about New Zealand television culture because children’s television is shown on weekend mornings or on weekday afternoons. It is easily dismissed as an off peak zone inhabited by violently coloured animated animals, gunge and hyperactive studio hosts.

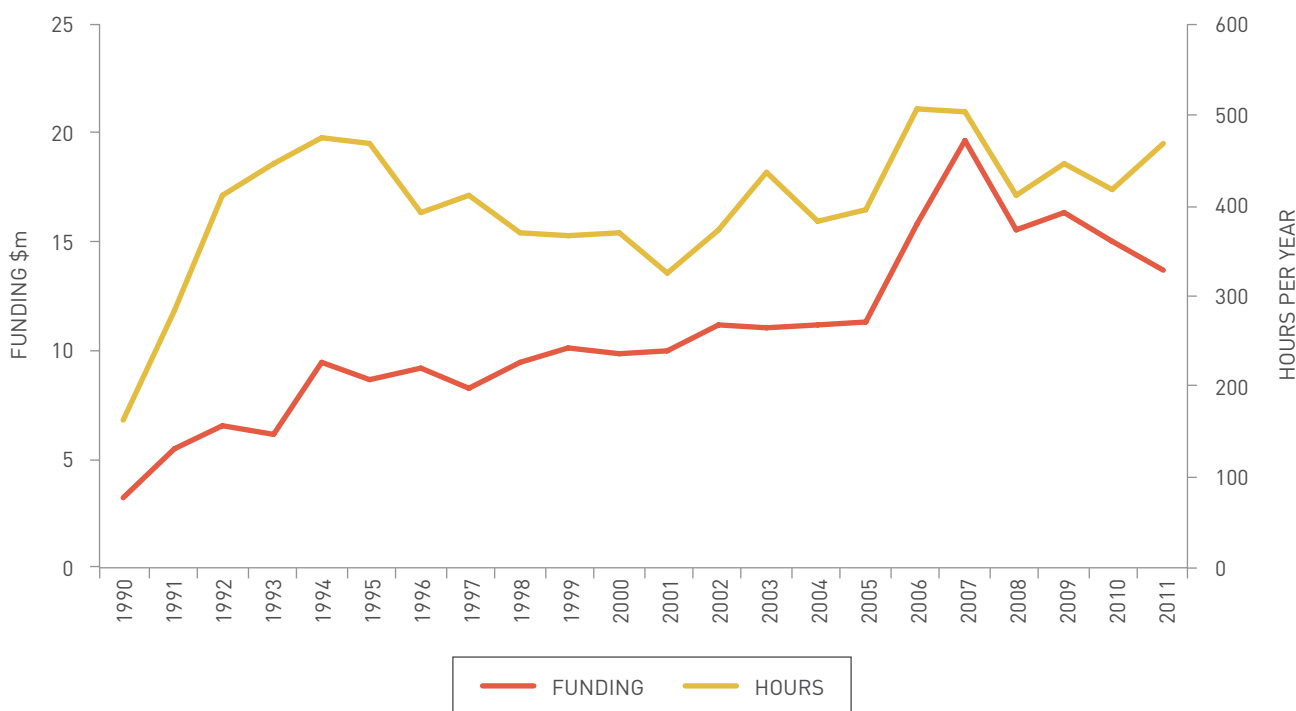
Yet, when issues around ‘quality children’s television’ have been on the agenda it seems as though everyone has had an opinion about the current state of children’s television and how it should be, if only because they have fond memories of their own favourite childhood programmes and presenters. Children’s television has attracted the attention of parents who, rightfully, have strong views about what their children’s television experiences should be. In turn, other influential political, religious and academic groups in the community also expect to have their voices heard when it comes to children’s provision, especially those who believe that television content has the power to influence children’s behaviour or future social choices. As NZ On Air’s first Executive Director Ruth Harley observed, children’s programming is an area of considerable interest to an educated and informed group of programme advocates, and parents in general (NZ On Air 1991 a).

To make things more challenging for the analysis of this aspect of local cultural provision, children’s television is not simply ‘a genre’. It embraces elements of magazine, news and current affairs, variety, drama, comedy, documentary and animation. Furthermore it doesn’t have one particular target audience. The needs and pleasures of early childhood audiences are quite distinct from those of the primary aged child, and the programme appeals for both these age groups are necessarily also designed for dual audiences: children on the one hand, and parents who decide what children view on the other. By contrast youth audiences often reject anything that may appeal to adults in their search for peer group ‘cool’ even while, paradoxically, evidently enjoying shared family viewing.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the development of the 1991 children’s funding policy during the first decade under the first CEO Ruth Harley and Television Managers Emily Loughnan and Jane Wrightson. The second section considers the ‘Space for the New’ review of children’s funding policy in the new millennium under CEO Jo Tyndall and Television Manager Neil Cairns. The third section begins in 2008 with the review of ‘Space for the New’ under Jane Wrightson as CEO and Glenn Usmar as Television Manager. Each section describes content funded for three broad age groups: early childhood, the primary aged child and youth, as well as funding initiatives for particular endangered genres, like animation and drama.

The following graph illustrates the broad picture of hours funded and the costs over the full period.

FIG 6 CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMES FUNDING AND HOURS 1990-2011



Source: NZ On Air Annual Reports 1990 -2011

The rise in hours in the early nineties is attributable to the early childhood programme *You and Me*. The modest spike in 2006/7 is the conjunction of a number of long-running strands.

PROVISION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE BROADCASTING ACT 1989

The inclusion of children as a specific group to be provided for by the Broadcasting Commission under 36 (c) of the 1989 Broadcasting Act was only decided at the final Select Committee stage. This was the result of lobbying and submissions from the likes of the Children’s Television Foundation (CTF), a lobby group of researchers, parents and producers set up in mid-1988 to ensure that flows of deregulated commercial media

content would be matched by public service diversity for children. They had observed the ‘wasteland’ of offerings for children in the early 1980s in the USA in the wake of television deregulation when toy companies, like Mattel, offered the television channels free programming in the form of ‘kidvids’ (animations with associated merchandise) and the wider production industry collapsed. During the 1980s the Children’s Television Workshop (creator of *Sesame Street*) was the only remaining provider of programming diversity for children in the USA (Palmer 1988).

THE EARLY YEARS

How did NZ On Air negotiate local cultural provision for children in the early years? Harley was aware that the deregulated environment presented real concerns for the volume and range of New Zealand children's programmes and the first couple of years saw intense politicking as funding for children's television became caught up in the dysfunctional relationship between TVNZ and NZ On Air (see Chapter 3). This period provides an instructional case study of how TVNZ reacted to a whole new way of doing things, and how NZ On Air devised new strategies to deal with this intransigence. TVNZ originally wanted 3-5 year commitments of money (NZ On Air 1991 b). As Emily Loughnan, NZ On Air's first television manager, put it:

TVNZ had to face up to two ex-employees for money [Harley and Loughnan] and you could not have a worse set up from their point of view...We were not taken seriously. They just thought they'd send a list and say could we have these squillions and a cheque would come back in the night...they weren't prepared that we would want to scrutinize and make sure that it was suitable to be funded under our criteria and help us meet our needs in terms of serving all those audiences.

Loughnan 2011

Huntly Elliott, Head of the Children's department of TVNZ at the time, explains the changed situation in a memo to TVNZ staff:

Prior to the advent of the Broadcasting Commission, funds from the Broadcasting Fee would have been made available to assist such productions heavily subsidized by TVNZ's revenue from its more profitable operations. Under the terms of the SOE act, however, such cross-subsidising is no longer permissible. Given this new situation, the Broadcasting Commission is the sole body with responsibility for ensuring that programmes with minority audience appeal are made and screened....it cannot achieve this if it seeks to fund high-profile, prime time programmes, which would be funded by commercial revenue anyway: indeed such an approach would ensure the demise of many programmes that children...now take very much for granted.

Elliott 1990

In late 1989 TVNZ demanded 100% funding for many 'off-peak' children's productions for 1990. Programmers in Auckland, to the anguish of Huntly Elliott, cancelled two long running children's shows (*10 out of 10* and *The Mostly Useful Job Guide*) when they did not receive 100% funding. In November 1989 NZ On Air wrote to producers of these programmes noting that they had 'offered to fund what it considered an appropriate amount towards both of these successful programmes. It is regrettable that TVNZ did not acknowledge this success by offering to contribute even one dollar' (NZ On Air 1989).

It took years for NZ On Air to build up relationships with programmers, like Bettina Hollings, and producers, like Janine Morrell, within TVNZ. Loughnan describes a critical shift that occurred once these relationships were established so that 'we could discuss our priorities and (in turn) we could understand what their needs were and ways to tackle genres like children's' (Loughnan 2011).

TV3, on the other hand, were much easier to deal with because they were much hungrier and grateful for any additional funding they could get. Furthermore Kel Geddes, the Australian programmer, regarded a quality children's zone as the lure to encourage parents to switch across from TVNZ. TV3 even commissioned a family drama, *The New Adventures of Black Beauty* (Isambard), in the 1989/90 round. Rex Simpson, the Head of Children's in the early days of TV3, put forward a slate of children's programmes: *Sports Shorts* (fronted by Phil Keoghan), *In Focus*, targeting secondary school students and a studio show *The Early Bird Show (EBS)*, fronted by the live puppets Russell Rooster (who interacted with children in the studio) and Kerry Kea (who interviewed the likes of David Lange and Edmund Hillary).

But, at the same time, Simpson also faced huge pressure from TV3 to increase commercial content and sponsorship. For example, all elements of *Yahoo*, the Saturday morning studio children's game show fronted by Keoghan and Moana Maniapoto were sponsored. This show was not included in requests for funding to NZ On Air. NZ On Air and TV3 fought over sponsorship of EBS and NZ On Air required that its funding was not supplemented by commercial sponsorship. Simpson understood the balancing act required to meet the

commercial requirements of broadcasters as well as to satisfy the mission of NZ On Air. He believes that there would have been no non-sponsored local children's content on TV3 without NZ On Air (Simpson 2011).

In December 1990 NZ On Air committed \$4 million to children's production, including non-commercial elements on two studio link shows, the long-standing *What Now?* strand, and the new *Early Bird Show* on TV3, as well as stand-alone repeatable shows like *Wild Track* and *Bidi Bidi*. There was community disappointment when *Video Dispatch*, the children's news show, was dropped by TVNZ when it did not receive 100% funding from NZ On Air.

THE IMPACT OF BROADCASTING COMPETITION

In early 1990 Huntly Elliott noted that the longstanding policy of his Children's department to reject violent animations left them '...vulnerable, in a competitive market, when one's opposition buys and screens the material in children's viewing time'. TV3, at the time, strip programmed *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. By the end of 1990 the TVNZ Children's Department, based in Christchurch, had lost control of what overseas material appeared within its local studio programmes when the Auckland-based programmer insisted on scheduling the scatological animation *Ren and Stimpy* within the *What Now?* strand, against the wishes of producer Gil Barker. This signalled that the ratings war had extended to off-peak afterschool and weekend television, even though inventory was often undersold, or consisted of 'run-of-station' advertising (for example for beds or store sales). Demand only picked up in the months preceding Christmas. Ratings have long been proved to be a highly unreliable measure when it comes to the child audience (Zanker 2002).

Broadcasters complained that local children's programming constituted an opportunity cost for their businesses, in that they were foregoing revenue from more commercial programmes. As a consequence, they wanted to spend as little money on this area as possible. Michelanne Forster, a children's director and script writer at TVNZ, describes the new environment as she saw it:

Links programmes became the order of the day. The formula was simple. Whip one cute presenter in front of one tacky flat with one locked off camera and let him rave. Toss in hours and hours of overseas material and Bob's your Uncle. Instant television at bargain prices. One producer I worked for (at TVNZ) proudly hung a sign on his office door: Sausage factory. 'I know we are only making sausages' he said, 'but we're aiming to make the best damn sausages around.'

Tube Views 1990

She argued for higher quality productions for children, including her own animation, *Rodney Rat*, which had been submitted to NZ On Air. TVNZ's Irene Gardiner observed that content like *Wild Track* needed to be wrapped in a commercially attractive package to survive. This might '...increase the chance of it (content) being taken in. A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down?' (Tube Views 1990). This binary between worthy educational television (Steven's spinach television see p 59) and entertainment is a recurring theme for commercial commissioners, but has been consistently challenged by producers, researchers and groups like CTF who argued that creativity bridges both education and entertainment. The broadcasters' lack of vision is well described by Simpson when he took his proposal *Let's Imagine*, targeting 7-12 year olds, to both TV2 and TV3 commissioners and was asked by each in turn: 'What's it like overseas?'. Simpson recalls responding to each 'Well there isn't anything overseas like it. It's unique.' He was disappointed, but not surprised, when neither commissioner took it on. At that time he was producing original content for the PBS system in the USA (Simpson 2011).

With the arrival of NZ On Air TVNZ lost the right to spend the broadcasting fee as they saw fit. They learned early on that NZ On Air's strategy, as funding advocate for diverse programming for children, was to play TVNZ commissioners off against TV3 commissioners in order to deliver a range of programming for children.

But NZ On Air also faced the challenge of delivering to the primary aged child in commercially programmed time zones, especially in terms of their requirement to fund value for money and to deliver audience reach. NZ On Air had to deal with commissioners and programmers at TV2 and TV3 who were required to deliver content that fitted their competitive schedules. In the worst scenario they could simply say 'we don't want anything on Saturday morning, or after school, we'll just go back to imported hit cartoons'.

Many of the recurrent themes in battles over the funding of children's programmes for the primary school and youth audiences over the next decade were already in evidence. First was the reluctance of both TV2 and TV3 to pay sufficient licence fees towards programmes with restricted commercial potential. Second, an increasing battle for ratings was signalled through a programming strategy of scheduling imported animation hits up against NZ On Air funded local programmes on the competing channel. Third, risk-averse channel programmers preferred linking programmes around imported cartoons to commissioning untested local stand-alone genres. Fourth there was no promotion for new children's content in off-peak zones which consigned innovative short run shows to oblivion.

In November 1990 CTF presented policy suggestions to address these road blocks to diversity at 'Public Sector Broadcasting in the Nineties', a public service broadcasting seminar conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies in association with NZ On Air. They called for the New Zealand equivalent of the US Children's Television Workshop to be set up, funded by a tax on advertisers, as well as an approach to other government agencies for more funding. Desirable regulatory requirements, like the Australian C-classification (quota) for local children's provision as part of licence requirements, were out of the question, given the deregulated New Zealand media environment (Zanker 1990). A range of such options were included by Ruth Harley for further discussion in background papers written for the Board early in 1991. This was preparatory work before designing and publishing the first children's funding strategy document in October 1991. We return to consider this document after a brief survey of early funding for primary aged, early childhood, and youth audiences.

FUNDING STRATEGY: THE DEDICATED CHILDREN'S FUND

By the end of 1991 NZ On Air had consulted widely, conducted research and held a cross-sector, children's seminar in Christchurch in order to inform a children's funding policy. The seminar had reached a consensus that a key issue was a variety of types of children's programmes and complementary scheduling. Harley observed that 'duplication was not assisting to achieve a wider variety in the range of programmes within a limited fund' (NZ On Air 1991 c). The seminar had also made abundantly clear that any policy '...must balance a range of often competing needs associated with the children as viewers, the broadcaster, the producer and children's advocacy groups' (NZ On Air 1991 d). A lack of funds had been identified as the root of problems relating to the fare offered in children's programming. 'This criticism is distinct from the general lack of funds gripe, it is rather that children's tends to be the poor cousin' (NZ On Air 1991 a). The decision was made to create a minimum fund dedicated to children

THE 1991 CHILDREN'S FUNDING POLICY

The funding strategy laid out a two tiered approach that has remained in place ever since. One approach targets the child as part of a specialist audience and the other identifies the child as part of the family audience.

- Age specific television: A variety of programmes that are indigenous, age-specific and cost-effective. NZ On Air will avoid duplication or funding similar programmes that reach their target audience in similar ways. NZ On Air will therefore generally select programmes on a competitive basis.
- Family audiences: 'A large number of fee payers make up this family audience and will be able to enjoy NZ On Air funded programmes which will include family drama and comedy programmes'.
- New Zealand programmes: Children's programmes are to reflect the diverse range of people in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. Maori language and culture are included as a natural part of indigenous programme making. Programmes will reflect an appreciation of our bi-culturalism.
- Quality: (which often meant different things to the various stake-holders).

- Value for money. To ensure that programmes are produced in the most cost effective manner and reach their intended audience.
- Continuing research.
- Continuing consultation. The key programmes funded after the 1991 consultative seminar were reviewed in 1992 to evaluate the impact of funding decisions.
- Promotion of programmes

(NZ On Air 1991 d)

The children's round differed from the other funding rounds where the television manager drew on external assessors with television background or assessed proposals themselves. For the first decade NZ On Air settled into a pattern of dedicated end of year children's funding rounds. It used specialist assessors and invited CTF representatives to bring in research and community perspectives. A range of commissioned audience research also informed decisions.

Early childhood programmes were (and continue to be) scheduled in non-commercial zones, and therefore attracted 100% funding. The negotiations over broadcasting contributions for older children's audience strands in more commercial zones have been contentious. Harley was clear that there was a negotiation to be had with broadcasters if these sorts of programmes were to be commissioned by commercial broadcasters. There was merit, in her view, in approaching the discussion of children's provision

...from a wider perspective by including our contributions to prime time programmes in the argument. If we are expected to contribute such high percentages to off-peak programmes that will impact on the amount of funds available for prime time programming and we would therefore expect that broadcasters' contribution to prime time programmes be higher.

NZ On Air 1991 f

Two groups were identified as being especially in need of particular programming: children under 5 and young people. The announcement of the children's funding strategy coincided with the announcement of funding for the first local early childhood programme, discussed next, and for *Shortland Street* (a local daily prime time soap). Both programmes were, arguably, designed to go a considerable way towards filling these identified gaps.

THE FIRST LOCAL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMME: GROWING THE INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION SECTOR

There had never been a local early childhood programme in New Zealand, although creative producers like Kim Gabara had made animations like *Woolly Valley* in studio 'down time'. Young children in New Zealand were served by imports from the UK and the USA: notably the reversioning of the BBC early childhood programme *Playschool* (starring Manu, Big Ted and Rawiri Paratene), and *Sesame Street* (where US Spanish language inserts were replaced with Maori language). These programmes served as training grounds for the two producers who dreamed of producing the first local early childhood programme, Rex Simpson and Janine Morrell.

As early as July 1989 Rex Simpson at TV3 had asked CTF for support for an early childhood programme and Janine Morrell, with Dr Geoff Lealand and Colleen Lockie, won funding to research an early childhood programme for TVNZ. Both programmes were given development funding by NZ On Air in order to employ formative child development research as pioneered by the Children's Television Workshop in the USA. The winning proposal was to be decided through a transparent contestable process, including external reviewers. The TV3 pilot proposal was presented to NZ On Air in early 1991 and TVNZ declared their intention in April that year.

Contestability had already been tested in a small way in the documentary genre, but now it became the key strategy for NZ On Air. As Loughnan says, contestability grew out of a

...reaction to a sort of underlying attitude from TVNZ that they had the God-given right to have access to this money...and we went...well not necessarily actually.

Loughnan 2011

The early childhood programme and the daily soap targeting families (*Shortland Street*) were the first major strands to be decided through the contestable process and, as has already been noted, both were central to the goals of the first children's funding strategy published in November 1991. The winner of the early childhood strand was announced in the same month. Rex Simpson won 100% funding for five years to produce *You and Me*.

Academic reviewers of the two contending proposals noted that the target audience for both proposals was well researched, but that *You and Me* offered a bonus of parenting tips for the secondary adult audience. These were created by early childhood expert Trish Gribben. As Loughnan puts it, Simpson's production system was very smart, and very cheap at \$4,742 per 30 minute episode compared to the \$18,200 per 30 minutes for the TVNZ proposal *Our House* (NZ On Air 1991 e).

He set himself up with a stream of work where repeats could keep costs low....so over 5 years it would stand on its own two feet because they were repeating and recycling... TVNZ, by contrast, set up a strand that required ongoing funding – (a) it was expensive to make and (b) it would continue to be expensive to make... whereas Rex could see it as a venture in its own right.

Loughnan, 2011

He produced a generation of pre-school content that could be repeated every three years for further generations of pre-schoolers. Over 1,000 episodes were made, and repeated throughout the 1990s.

His new company KTV had a critical role in growing the children's production sector. Suzy Cato, the much loved front person for *You and Me*, went on to create *Suzy's World*, an often hilarious science show. KTV also gave the early childhood trained Mary Phillips her first production gig. She went on to become the respected child-centred executive producer of *Pickled Possum*, a company that has been commissioned to create content for TV2, TV3 and TV4 as well as for the short lived public service channel TVNZ6.

Simpson set up his independent production company KTV in Dunedin. He describes 'lots of conversations with NZ On Air about working as an independent producer' and observes that there was a clear 'shift in the paradigm towards independent programme makers' by NZ On Air, as well as TV3.

Bean counters in TV3 found it far more beneficial to have people out making programmes rather than having in-house productions taking place...it was more efficient than with staff resources.

Simpson 2011

Harley noted that Morrell had also indicated an interest in becoming an independent producer but that TVNZ continued to produce large children's strands in-house. NZ On Air actively encouraged TVNZ to be ready to commission the next early childhood series, in the wake of the success of *You and Me* on TV3. TVNZ and Morrell finally won NZ On Air funding for her independently produced early childhood show *Bumble* in 1997, first shown on TV2 in 1998.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AGED AUDIENCE

What Now?, begun in 1981, was, and remains, the heavyweight presence targeting primary school aged children. It was a popular weekly fixture for children and their families on Saturday mornings on TV2 long before NZ On Air began funding it in the early 1990s. Its magazine format appealed to children with an irreverent mix of studio-based personalities (who became local stars), comedy sketches, interactive phone-ins, studio competitions (including being 'gunged' in vats of goo) and diverse field items (visits to fans in the regions, sports competitions, and physical dares).

What Now? has been an important training ground for generations of television producers, directors and craftspeople, many of whom have gone on to excel in higher profile genres like documentary and drama, as well as the unsung art of fast turn-around studio television. It has mentored award winning script writers like Andrew Gunn and script writer/presenter hosts became household names: Danny Watson, Al Kincaid, Michelle A'Court, Simon Barnett, Catherine McPherson, Shavaughn Ruakere and Jason Faa'foi.

During the first decade of NZ On Air TVNZ kept its *What Now?* flagship production in-house, shifting the children's unit to Avalon from Christchurch in 1999, in order to make the proposed sale of Avalon a more attractive prospect. Only in 2003 did TVNZ close its Children's Department, enabling Morrell's Christchurch-based production company Whitebait Productions to acquire the rights to produce *What Now?*, which it has done ever since.

The other early strand for the primary school child on TV2 was *Son of a Gunn* starring Jason Gunn and the puppet 'Thingee'. In 1992 studio based linking elements were funded to play around imported cartoons. These contained elements of local educational content, humour and role models and, importantly, were the only New Zealand presence within the weekday afternoon schedule of animated 'kidvids'.

Other early stand-alone programmes like *Tiki Tiki Forest Gang* (Taylormade), *Oi* (Johnston Productions) an early science show which won three awards in the USA, and *The Posey Narkers* (TVNZ) were commissioned. The concept of 'Russian doll' style of programming, which could enable short programmes by independent producers to live under the umbrella of programmes like *What Now?* had been identified as a strategy as early as the 1991 children's television seminar in Christchurch. Later in the decade fresh programme concepts like *Dress Up Box* (Papageno) and *The Big Chair* (Raconteur) were funded.

THE YOUTH AUDIENCE

Youth has been served under the children's provision since the start of NZ On Air but were only added as a specific group under the 2001 amendment to the Broadcasting Act. Loughnan and Harley had been impressed by research presented by Geoff Lealand at the consultative seminar on children's television in Christchurch in August 1991 that demonstrated that young New Zealanders didn't want to hear New Zealand accents.

It was clear that the upper end of the youth market were getting absolutely no New Zealand content in their diet and wanting to watch McGyver and Neighbours and things like that.

Loughnan, 2011

The other default form of youth programming consisted of imported music videos. One obvious strategy was to give them more New Zealand accents in more places to overcome this cultural cringe.

The funding of *Shortland Street* for a prime time audience on TV2 in 1991 was designed from the start to target this elusive 11 to 17 year old youth audience. As Loughnan puts it, the decision to make a soap 'was to take the mountain to Mohammed' (Loughnan 2011).

Specifically youth targeted shows were funded as well. The award winning show *In Focus* was devised to be 'not about teenagers but by teenagers' (Simpson 2011). Ian Kingsford Smith worked with teenagers in Dunedin to enable them to make their own items which were then shown on TV3, thus '... providing a voice for young people in terms of young people' (Simpson 2011). Media teachers were enthusiastic because it provided a rationale for school equipment purchases, and some participants went on telling their stories via careers in television. It won local and international awards, as well as interest from SBS in Australia and producers around the Pacific, who hoped to build an international circuit of item swaps, but the show was dropped by TV3 in 1994 when it failed to rate sufficiently.

Innovative shows like *In Focus* faced 'death by scheduling', either by being on when the audience was not there to view them, or by being put up against higher rating imported material. Yet the system of national television ratings was often regarded as highly unreliable when it came to niche audiences like children and young people. To compound the problem, no commercial channel could afford to spend money promoting off-peak programmes, especially those in non-commercial Sunday morning zones, and NZ On Air continued to be anxious that there was a low awareness by young audiences of new programmes targeting them.

Despite this, shows targeting youth launched media careers for a generation of local stars: TVNZ's *Life in the Fridge Exists* with Hilary Timmins (1990), TV3's *Ice TV* (1993) with Jon Bridges, Nathan Rarere and Petra Bagust. Evermore, The Datsuns, Brooke Fraser, Anika Moea, Flight of the Conchords, Elemeno P, Fat Freddy's drop, Ladió, The Feelers, Fur Patrol, King Kapisi, Bic Runga and Nesian Mystic all had early success in *The Smokefree Rock Quest*. *Smokefree Stage Challenge* enabled many young performers to get their first break.

In 1995 a show for rangatahi, which had previously appeared within the *Marae* programme, was brought to NZ On Air for funding by Tainui Stephens and TV2. *Mai Time*, scheduled on Saturdays at 11.00am, was designed as a mix of teenage culture and Maoritanga. It moved easily "between English and Maori and back providing an ongoing cultural context relevant to all young people." (NZ On Air 1995 b). In 1997 it broke into prime time on TV2 at 9.00pm on Sunday evenings.

Mai Time launched the television careers of Teremoana Rapley and others. Anahera Higgins, who began producing *Mai Time* in 2004, went on to produce *I Am TV*, an innovative concept discussed later (see p 85).

VALUE FOR MONEY

Loughnan observes that funding decisions were ‘...all driven out of the audience we were required to serve under the Act and the question of how we can reach them’. The other question for NZ On Air was whether they were giving too much money to broadcasters for what was being delivered on screen for children.

It is a real game you play. You can't put all your money on one horse. It is about developing the industry, it's about developing the audience and increasing the types and amounts of content they are exposed to so that you can give them better choices and so develop a culture that might not be there.

Loughnan 2011

TVNZ complained in the early years that TV3 had preferential treatment from NZ On Air, but NZ On Air observed that TV3 were easier to deal with because the channel commissioners were more transparent in their demands and were willing to support programming that was close to NZ On Air's objectives, some of which had been rejected by TVNZ. The state broadcaster's production budgets included higher contributions in terms of overheads, rate of return and opportunity costs and continued to be difficult to negotiate. Funding balances swung back in TVNZ's favour after 1995.

Funding decisions in the early years were pragmatic. NZ On Air drew on the best of the USA Children's Television Workshop model, where educational formative testing defined public programming for children, and the UK production culture where creative ideas drove projects (Steemers 2010). The goal was to create a lively mix which embraced on-going commitment to large studio productions like *What Now?* (which accounted for half the children's television budget in 1997) and stand-alone creative concepts.

Sometimes a commissioner might fight for a project and compromises were made. For example, Geoff Steven wanted NZ On Air to fund the Saturday morning show *Squirt* (Taylormade) on TV3. This show employed early CGI technology to animate its penguin host (and a Scottish fish!). NZ On Air refused to pay for

software that had life beyond the programme, so this was developed through a grant from the Ministry of Technology. *Squirt* followed Geoff Steven to TVNZ where it appeared on TV2 on Saturday morning.

The objectives for children's television funding were refocused each year according to where the audiences were and what they responded to. Research into particular audiences was regularly commissioned (1991, 1992, 1994, 1997). Particular goals to expand diversity continued to be set, sometimes through setting up a dedicated fund to encourage commissioning of more difficult genres, like animation and drama.

The 1991 strategy for funding children's programmes is remarkable in that it remained the backbone of the funding strategy for children for the first decade, even though recurring crises challenged the funder in its mission to deliver diversity to children. More detailed funding policies were reworked throughout the 1990s for endangered genres like drama and animation.

THE FIRST DECADE: WINS AND LOSSES

In 1993 bragging was in order for Harley and her team as they announced funding of \$6.5 million for 446 hours of locally-made children's television projects. There was also funding for an interloper, the daily soap *Shortland Street* ticketed for \$2.25m from the drama fund. NZ On Air observed:

The runaway ratings success of programmes like Shortland Street shows that quality drama about New Zealanders has the power to push aside imported cartoons and game shows for this audience. We have been trying, since our inception, to bring quality programmes about New Zealand to young viewers wherever and whenever they are watching.

NZ On Air 1993

From 162 funded hours in 1990 children's programming blossomed to 476 hours in 1994. The genre was cheap (at an average of \$19,753 per funding hour) and strands, many designed to have a long life, were repeated. That same year a review of children's viewing behaviour (NZ On Air 1994) demonstrated that local content for children was deeply appreciated by its audience.

This optimism was short lived. Children's hours would not surpass this number of hours again until 2006.

TVNZ and TV3 persisted in their complaint that children's programming cost them money and, as a consequence, there were ongoing niggles about the level of broadcaster contribution to big shows with commercial appeal like *What Now?*. In 1993 NZ On Air asked that New Zealand content on *What Now?* be increased and the application at the October round contained a proposed hour of entirely New Zealand content.

The 1995/6 NZ On Air Annual Report called for the repositioning of funding decisions in order to concentrate resources on high cost programmes which had difficulty in attracting sufficient levels of marketplace funding. This included children's programming. NZ On Air had developed a policy of offering around 80% of the budget for new or emerging children's series and around 50% for established series like *What Now?* The question loomed of how best to balance the funding of more commercially appealing presenter driven shows, like *What Now?*, with a desire to encourage riskier diversity of style and content for child audiences (NZ On Air 1995).

In 1996 TVNZ decided to shift *What Now?* to non-commercial Sunday morning and this episode demonstrates the brinkmanship that surrounded the children's funding round. The Sunday morning delivery had clear benefits for NZ On Air in terms of improved ratings and the opportunity to remove commercialism around the show (but not necessarily within it), but also meant that TVNZ sought a higher subsidy from NZ On Air. If NZ On Air refused this request for funding, the broadcaster had the power to drop the programme, or put it back on Saturday mornings, up against a new NZ On Air venture on TV3. NZ On Air wanted to avoid that scenario in light of its policy of avoiding funding overlaps in the schedule.

In the end NZ On Air proposed, given that *What Now?* was established and successful, that a contribution of 75% of the budget be considered appropriate, which was a substantial increase on the contribution of 47% in 1995 (NZ On Air: 1995 c). *What Now?* received funding of \$1.5m for 44 two hour shows on Sunday from 8.00 -10.00 am. The result for NZ On Air was that

As a consequence NZ On Air will fund a lower volume of higher quality children's programmes at a higher average cost per funded hour.

NZ On Air 1995/1996

The slide in hours of children's programming continued with the erosion of NZ On Air's funding base. *What Now?* and its weekday offshoot *WNTV* were expensive: 44 hours of non-commercial 2 hour Sunday shows for \$1.6m and 200 half hour episodes of the afterschool programme, *WNTV*, for \$2.6m, a total of \$4.2m, out of a total budget of \$8.29m for children's programmes (NZ On Air 1996/1997). Anxiety increased in the NZ On Air's 1997/8 annual report. By 1997 children's round applications totalled over \$16 million, while the children's budget was just over \$8 million.

By now TV2 and TV3 each wanted on-going funding for their own long running shows. At the same time NZ On Air was trying to spread its funding into durable programme types, as opposed to relatively inexpensive magazine strands.

The 1998 round saw NZ On Air committing the most funding ever to children's programmes and additional funding was reallocated from other budgets. This budget increase was partly because there was a good range of proposals which resulted in three new strands (*Bumble*, *Science Suzy* and *Wired*). *Wired*, a long sought after news programme for young people, was 'agreed to as a sweetener' in the light of extra funding to *What Now?*. However it was viewed by TVNZ as a high risk programme in the agreed time slot of 5.00pm and it had a short life (NZ On Air 1998).

There was no room for new children's initiatives without more funding. Funded children's hours dropped from 410 hours in 1997 to 369 hours in 1998.

Cracks are appearing, and growing as funding pressures increase and income plateaus.... We have already seen a worrying decline in children's broadcast hours over the last two years... The experience of the last ten years makes it very clear that public interest broadcasting cannot and will not survive in a fully commercial market.

NZ On Air 1998/1999

NZ On Air called for more funding, if hours were not to reduce further.

THE FIRST DECADE: ENDANGERED GENRES

Animation and drama had been identified as endangered species at the first consultative seminar in 1991. By 1999 only one children's drama had been produced in seven years.

DRAMA

There had been a distinguished history of award winning early Sunday evening TVNZ 'kidult' dramas in the late 1970s and early 1980s (*Under the Mountain*, *Children of the Dog Star*, *Boy from Andromeda*, *The Haunting of Barney Palmer*) but programmers' perceptions of changing audience tastes put an end to these. Ongoing NZ On Air audience research demonstrated parental desire for more children's drama, but its expense and short runs made the genre unpopular with channel programmers.

NZ On Air funding during the first decade echoed an international trend towards commissioning short form dramas, like *Mel's Amazing Movies*, adapted from Margaret Mahy stories and funded in 1993, and shown within *What Now?*.

The only children's drama series commissioned in the first decade of NZ On Air was an Australian/New Zealand co-production *Mirror Mirror* (Millennium Pictures/Gibson Group). This was funded for a second series in 1996 and went on to win gold at World Fest in Houston, was a finalist at the Prix Jeunesse in Germany (the premier children's television festival) and reached the finals in the children's drama category at the Australian Film Institute Awards. Clearly production quality was not the critical issue for children's drama.

Finally in 1999 NZ On Air was able to allocate funding for a new drama tender and *Being Eve* (South Pacific Pictures) was commissioned by TV3 to screen in 2001. This follows 14 year old Eve, 'an anthropologist of teen life'. South Pacific Pictures made agreements with Nickelodeon and secured Fireworks as international distributor. It was sold to 60 territories and won numerous international awards, including World Medal in 2002, the Prix Danube in 2003, the NY Festival TV Award, as well as reaching the semi-finals of the Emmy awards. It was possibly appreciated more abroad than in New Zealand because TV3 scheduled it, unheralded, on Saturday afternoons and, predictably, it failed to

reach many of its intended audience (Lavranos & Lustyik 2005).

This children's drama initiative, begun in 1999 as a one-off, was continued into the new millennium as a result of efforts by NZ On Air to retain broadcaster focus on the genre.

ANIMATION

In the briefing paper in October 1993 it was noted that animation was very expensive and slow to produce, but was important because it comprised 'a significant part of the viewing diet of children'. There was some nervousness about how to proceed further. Five Margaret Mahy stories, *The Magical World of Margaret Mahy*, were funded in 1994. One strategy being mooted was for short strands to be commissioned for inclusion within existing weekly strands like *What Now?*, in order to build enough product to enable concepts to stand alone in the schedule. Options for international sales were also explored. A modest conference on the role of children's animation was proposed for 1994.

NZ On Air continued to say that they wanted to commission animation because it provided 'children with a special relationship to their own world' (NZ On Air 1995/1996). Unfortunately, like drama, it was seen by broadcasters as giving little bang for buck when they could import fail-safe hit animations instead. How best to balance the cost and length of production for animation against the cost-effectiveness of magazine programmes?

NZ On Air proposed to fund animation every two years and encouraged the search for offshore investment. The following years saw some important animation commissions that showcased fresh ideas from local animators, many of whom were distinguished creatives from the advertising industry, like Euan Frizzell and Cameron Chittick. *The Magical World of Margaret Mahy* was funded in 1994. *Oscar and Friends*, the first animation series co-production, was co-funded with Australian Southern Star for 26 episodes in 1998 (NZ On Air contributed \$1.5m). This animation was rated number 10 for children on ITV in the UK and successfully syndicated to the US (Slane n/d).

Hairy Maclary (Gnome productions & Euan Frizzell), the most successful project, appeared in 1998. It had a long shelf life in Australia and New Zealand and is still

available on video. *The Adventures of Cumie the Cloud* (Fly Wheel Productions) was funded in 1996 and appeared in 1998. *Tamatoa the Brave Warrior* (Flux Animation), the first animation project funded by NZ On Air to feature Maori stories, and *The Mouse Bride* (Hugh Macdonald Productions), an adaptation of one of three Joy Cowley stories, each received funding in 1998.

Cost remained a serious barrier and producers' successes in securing co-production funding were patchy. The time frame required for completion of animation projects, and their short runs, presented challenges for marketing. As one animator put it:

Broadcasters need at least six months of good ratings, to determine if a series has long-term appeal, but a shortage of animation at the time of commission can turn into a glut by completion.

Slane n/d

RAUTAKI MAORI AND CHILDREN'S CONTENT

2000 saw the policy of Rautaki Maori established and a formal requirement for all children's programmes to promote Maori language and culture where relevant. This re-energised the 1991 funding strategy requirement that Maori language and culture and an appreciation of bi-culturalism be incorporated as a natural part of local children's programmes. This encouraged new children's and mainstream Maori programmes, including innovative reversioning and subtitling collaboration between NZ On Air and Te Mangai Paho.

Moko Toa (Te Haeata Productions), a series of short five minute dramas about Hori, a young Maori boy who is the modern transformation of an ancient hero, combined live action with animation. This was reversioned into English with NZ On Air funding and shown on Sunday mornings.

Te Mangai Paho also funded *Tumeke*, which evolved into *Pukana* (Cinco Cine), an award winning Maori language show for primary aged children which played first on TV4, later moving to TV3. This show won the best Children's New Zealand Television award in 1999, and the Qantas Media Children's Award in 2003, the first time a show entirely in Maori had won mainstream awards. It is a funny, energetic show targeting Maori

speakers between 8 and 14 years, but attracts a much wider Pakeha audience with its regional reports and activities. The show currently plays in Maori on Maori Television, and on FOUR and on the Te Reo channel on Maori Television. Since 2006 NZ On Air has funded subtitles for its mainstream showings on Sunday mornings on TV3. The executive producer, Nicole Hoey, unabashedly uses the show to grow Maori creative and production talent. Former presenters include Quinton Hita, Matai Smith, Pirihiira Hollings, Te Hamua Nikora, Reikura Morgan and Tumamao Harawira who have all gone on to forge impressive careers in broadcasting. Te Atirau Paki, a presenter for six years, trained as an associate producer and is now the senior director on *Pukana*.

In 2007 the bilingual *Tu te Puehu* (Te Aratai Productions) was funded to promote active lifestyles. It appeared on Maori Television and TV3.

2000: A PROPOSED REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S FUNDING POLICY

The crisis facing the children's budget came to a head at the October 1999 Children's and Special Interest Funding Round. 24% of its total television spend was aimed at children and young people and it was becoming evident that no new initiatives were possible, nor was there room for expansion within existing programmes. The recently appointed CEO Jo Tyndall was intent on developing a new strategy. After consultation and research, a proposed new strategy was circulated in June, prior to a Children's Programming Forum held in October 2000.

The 2000 discussion document on children's television was forward looking. Funding for non-broadcasting digital content was only implemented in 2008 in the amendment to the Broadcasting Act, but the discussion document already asked for stakeholder consideration of how NZ On Air investment could be broadened to allow for what was termed 'web tv', as fast emerging opportunities for interactivity via the internet and online content became possible. By 2008 several producers of popular children's strands had already established vibrant interactive websites funded either by producers, or supported by broadcaster websites. Their fans demanded it.

The discussion document raised questions about the current balance between funding of linking shows and other genres. Something had to give. NZ On Air set out initiatives to identify gaps in the current range of programmes through a funding matrix to assess current balance and diversity. CTF recommended that NZ On Air institute a 'quality mark' for programming that met its requirements.

Audience research, conducted by Colmar Brunton prior to a programming forum, identified perennial questions around parental versus children's preferences. Adult informants wanted more drama, news and information, while children enjoyed fast-paced popular culture and prizes. There were also questions around emerging opportunities for further replay of NZ On Air funded material and subtitling. Yet again there was a suggestion for more formal links with public agencies such as CYFS, Ministry of Education, The Commission for Children, Kohanga Reo Trust and Kura Kaupapa in order to leverage existing expertise and research, as well as draw on new funding sources for cultural and educational material.

NEW COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The discussion document reflects not only the anxieties created by the familiar funding stalemate around genre diversity, but also the new opportunities and challenges emerging as children's producers pioneered forms of media branding and delivery.

In 1998 the parental frenzy to acquire soft toys promoted by pre-school *Teletubbies* (a BBC production), in advance of the show being shown in New Zealand, was highly instructional. As Geoff Steven at TVNZ put it 'there was hysteria out in the supermarkets with mums throttling each other to try and buy a doll'. The innovative Bettina Hollings, then the TV3 programmer, used the hit animation as a ratings spoiler against NZ On Air funded *WNTV*, the afterschool strand of *What Now?* (Zanker 2002).

The *Teletubbies* episode demonstrates the growing power of merchandise to brand and promote children's content. Janine Morrell, a commercially savvy early adopter, had already experimented with merchandise for her early childhood show *Bumble*. She appreciated how merchandise might create new revenue streams, especially if a show became a hit in larger markets overseas. This raised new questions around funding. NZ On Air asked how best to balance 'good' merchandising and multi-media initiatives (which could not only promote new titles, but also offset the amount of public funding needed to make a series) within their public mandate of enriching children's experiences.

Morrell had also developed merchandise in order to promote *What Now?*, and extended that show's production budget through relationships with 'squeaky clean' sponsors like Weetbix (the Kiwi kids' Tryathlon) and New Zealand Post, who demanded measureable exposure and mentions for their sponsorship deals. *Studio 2* had a less onerous agreement for free text messaging in return for a large model cellphone in the studio called Eric. Both *What Now?* and *Studio 2* had associations with Sport and Recreation New Zealand to promote the 'Push Play' fitness initiative (including a school wide 'Super Squad' challenge). Ian Taylor, however, challenged the system with a controversial plan to promote *Squirt* via a fast food chain.

Commercial partnerships and sponsorship activities raised questions first addressed in the 1990s: what was the role of sponsors, and their content requirements, in publicly funded shows? And what constituted ethical sponsorship in shows targeting children? NZ On Air asked stakeholders for views and developed guidelines around sponsorship, prize packages promotion and merchandising. NZ On Air also suggested that it become more involved in the planning of corporate sponsorship within linking shows (like fast food sponsorship in *Squirt*) from the early stages to avoid possible public controversy.

2003: THE 'SPACE FOR THE NEW' CHILDREN'S FUNDING STRATEGY

NZ On Air continued to lament that:

One of NZ On Air's greatest concerns is the continuing decline of locally-made children's programmes. The number of children's programmes dropped again in 2001, continuing a decline that began in 1992. Less than two per cent of the total programming schedule on New Zealand's three free-to-air channels is created to meet the needs of New Zealand children.

NZ On Air 2002 b

Television choices for children were growing with specialised subscription channels like Nickelodeon, Disney and Fox Kids. It was critical that New Zealand programmes had 'cut through' because children wouldn't watch New Zealand programmes out of a sense of duty.

A gap analysis was conducted as part of a bid for additional funding. It identified significant gaps in provision: no children's drama for any age group, *Mai Time* as the only programme produced within the category of mainstream Maori programming, very little 'educational' programming (with the exception of *Suzy's World* a science show for younger viewers, and the quiz show *The Machine* for 13-16 year olds) and no arts and performance programming for children under 12 years (NZ On Air 2001 a).

By 2001 the studio based programme *What Now?* was 20 years old and its successful format, a mix of comedy sketches, interactive phone ins, studio competitions and field items, was a national tradition. The problem for NZ On Air was that over half the budget for children was invested in this and other linking strands. The October round for children's programming seemed to be dedicated to renewing big shows supported by broadcasters, who continued to argue that such shows injected New Zealand identity and culture 'around cartoons'. This 'vegeburger' approach resulted in limited opportunity to invest in new stand-alone programmes and innovation. Was there a better way of doing things?

The 2003 'Space for the New' strategy paper presented a detailed set of action points for the next five years. Decisions were made to move from the annual children's round to enable fresh proposals to be presented throughout the year and that a funding matrix exercise be conducted annually to assess current balance and diversity. The audience was divided into four, rather than the original three audience groupings: pre-schoolers, 5-9 years, 9-14 years, and youth (14-18 years), thus reflecting a new commercial focus on the emerging audience group tagged 'tweens'.

Most critically for funding policy for magazine programmes like *What Now?* the strategy proposed that a decision be made:

...to contribute to these shows at a lower level of investment. Further, over the life of the (first 5 year) strategic plan, NZ On Air would like to eventually exit entirely from this type of programming to allow for investment in cost effective stand-alone series or programmes that can compete with the international fare with which our children are provided.

NZ On Air 2002 b

But research demonstrated that children remained loyal to such 'vegeburger' appointment viewing, and that such programmes were viewed as potent vehicles for delivering New Zealand content to children in a number of genre elements, such as comedy, news and sport. NZ On Air were persuaded that experienced executive producers of children's magazine and linking strands, like Janine Morrell at Whitebait TV and Mary Phillips at Pickled Possum, played a critical role in supervising innovative new producers, thus growing the independent industry base. This was the case made for supporting the interstitial strategy discussed next.

SPACE FOR THE NEW: INTERSTITIALS AND ANIMATION

A range of short interstitials of 1-2 minutes were funded to play within the afterschool spin off of *What Now?*, *WNTV*, in a strategy to grow small creative elements into high value stand-alone programmes. The great success story was *The Goober Brothers* (Republic TV) which starred '...a couple of idiots who make stupid inventions that go horribly wrong, such as the Smelliphone and the Fax Toaster'. The original one minute long interstitial series showcased adults'

inventions, but the advertising creative originators, Nola and Stichbury, received so many invention suggestions from children that they then developed a stand-alone show that drew on kids' inventions. *Let's Get Inventin'*, described as *Monster Garage* for kids' (Ideologue 2006), rode on international interest in invention programmes and won a family viewing timeslot which, unlike the children's zones, attracted promotional support. By 2011 five series had been funded. Another concept devised by this team, *Life on Ben*, follows the adventures of odd couple germs, Gordon and Gloob, who meet on Ben's face.

The interstitial *Jessie.com* (Whitebait) sold to the Disney channel and played in the USA and Australia. It is worth noting that *Studio 2* (TVNZ & Taylormade) began as an interstitial in 2004 around the Nickelodeon hit cartoon *Spongebob Squarepants*. In 2005 it became a half hour block from 4.30, a far more costly proposal for NZ On Air. The longer show also became more exposed to ratings pressure than the short interstitial. It can be claimed that the interstitial strategy permitted production experimentation while offering some protection to riskier content within higher rating strands.

The WNTV interstitial marketing push had mixed results. There appeared to be some increasing traction for, and international market interest in, quirky new initiatives by New Zealand creative animation teams drawn to children's content. But it became clear that concepts designed for 1- 2 minute slots were not easily adapted to desired 25 minute packages. It also continued to be a challenge to complete animation projects on time and within budget (Simon 2008).

Other quirky director-driven WNTV animations funded in the early millennium included *Tulevai and the Sea* (the third Joy Cowley story to be animated by Bob Stenhouse); *The Adventures of Massey Ferguson*, adventures of a small tractor with a big knack for resourcefulness and problem solving (Flux and Jim Mora); and *Staines down Drains* (Flux and Jim Mora), a 26 x 24 minute animation series for 8-10 year olds, co-produced with Australian studio Yorum Gross-EM. Two children are suddenly sucked down the pipes to Drain land where they save the day. *Jandalbirds* (Quick TV), funded in 2005 for 8 episodes of 30 minutes each, was a Polynesian take off of the UK cult puppet show *Thunderbirds*. There have been sales to Germany,

Australia, USA and Ireland. NZ On Air hoped to justify the high cost of animation, compared to other genres, with opportunities for multiple transmissions and international sales. But this proved a challenge.

SPACE FOR THE NEW: GROWING CHILDREN'S DRAMA

NZ On Air suggested to the government that there was international interest in New Zealand children's drama and that funding to make more of our stories could be generated by either co-production or programme sales. This echoed the successful international co-production deals that enabled *Mirror Mirror* and *Being Eve* to be made. It was argued that two children's drama series should be produced each year and it sought an additional \$3.2m for children's drama to enable this (NZ On Air 2001 a).

A drama initiative was announced for two projects to be broadcast on TV2 and TV3, and three new drama series were in development for contestable funding. The annual report for 2001 reports that 39.5 hours of new children's drama had been funded. Occasional foreign investment helped with the production costs. For example in 2004 NZ On Air was a minority investor in the production of *Maddigan's Quest* (the South Pacific Pictures/BBC adaption of a Margaret Mahy story) and the lighter *Holly's Heroes* (9 Network Australia and TVNZ). As well, TVNZ produced and won funding for *Killian's Curse* and *Karaoke High*.

Greenstone followed up *Secret Agent Men*, a spy spoof for teens which won the 2004 youth/children's Qantas award, with another hit *Amazing Extraordinary Friends (AEF)*. Series 1 of *AEF* sold to ABC Australia, and 2 and 3 sold to Nickelodeon. *AEF* was a finalist at the RomaFictionFest International Competition and was winner of the Best Children's programme at the 2008 Qantas Awards. Both shows grew cult followings on the internet.

Other shorter form dramas appeared like the popular 2003 *P.E.T. Detectives* (Screentime Communicado) for TV2, where kids help out errant ghosts, aliens and hapless time-travellers who can't find their way home, and *Freaky Dramas* (Tony Palmer, Avalon) a collection of short, pacy and visually exciting New Zealand stories with a supernatural theme that played within *What Now?*.

Two series of an early childhood programme *Party Animals* (Imagination TV, a venture from Bettina Hollings) were funded in 2001 and 2002 and a studio popular variety show for the primary aged audience, *The Wannabes* (Whitebait Productions) added to the genre mix in 2005.

By 2007 the children's programming allocation, combined with children's drama, was the second largest genre of television funded by NZ On Air (after drama). In 2008 the \$15.6 million allocation comprised 21% of NZ On Air's total television spend. TV3's commitment had increased year on year.

THE 2008 REVIEW OF 'SPACE FOR THE NEW'

The new CEO, Jane Wrightson and Television Manager Glenn Usmar initiated a review of the ambitious action points laid out in the 2003 'Space for the New' strategy.

By 2007 total funding had increased, but per hour funding had remained static and the dilemmas over funding magazine shows versus other range and diversity remained. This was exacerbated by the increasing contribution from NZ On Air for costs of *What Now?* on non-commercial Sunday mornings. The decision was made to return to a dedicated October Children's round to ensure sufficient focus on the genre as a whole. The promised matrix annual review of genre diversity, which had lapsed, was revived and early childhood and animation genres were identified as key genres for future production funding.

The discussion document notes that the 2008 Digital Partnership Strategy (discussed below p 86) was designed, in part, to target children and young people, both in terms of enriching children's programme experience, but also as a means of boosting programmes via merchandise and promotion (Simon 2008).

A forum on children's and young person's funding was proposed.

THE CHILDREN'S FORUM

In June 2008 NZ On Air mounted a Forum designed to find new ways to assess and improve NZ On Air's content delivery to children and young people. Discussions arising from the rapidly changing media environment and new opportunities for interactivity and co-production dominated the Forum.

Audience research presented demonstrated that television was still important for New Zealand children. They watched the same amount of television in 2008 as they did five years before, although those in Sky homes watched more each day than those without Sky (Cottrell 2008). But it was evident that challenges loomed for local production as shows faced increasing competition from Sky TV's children's channels, funded and promoted by global media conglomerates. TV2 remained the strongest individual channel for children, and TV3 had an important niche, but Sky's share of the 5-14 year old age group had grown steadily since the launch of Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network in the mid-1990s.

By 2008 the combined share of the four children's channels (Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Disney and preschool Playhouse Disney) made Sky the market leader in the 5-14 age group. These global channels link to trans-media environments and target children with enticing gaming and advergaming (Zanker 2011 b). They were programmed in Australia and geared to Australian timezones and there was no commitment to New Zealand content (Simon 2008).

At the Forum, the inspirational Tim Brooke-Hunt, ex BBC and then Head of Children's at the ABC, spoke of the need to widen the children's genre to include the traditional public service diversity of genres: news, current affairs, documentaries, wild life, real life adventures, games sports programmes, music and videos. Dan Fill, Head of multi-platform production at the ABC talked about 360 production and interactivity.

The heavy local content regulation that still exists in Australia presents a radically different context for children's production and the contrast between funding for children's media in New Zealand and Australia remains instructional. The Australian Labour government in 2009 allocated \$140 million (AUD) to

the ABC to introduce one digital children's television channel ABC3. The same year NZ On Air invested \$16 million (NZ) into children's productions on all free-to-air television channels and in all genres.

One is reminded of Roger Horrock's observation on returning from the first World Congress on Children's Television in 1995: that we operate in a unique deregulated broadcasting environment, and cannot easily draw on more regulated overseas models.

The producers' panel, not unsurprisingly, made the now familiar recurring plea for broadcasters to consider innovative shows which embrace a diversity of genres. Also familiar, from 1991 briefing papers, and again the 2000 review of children's funding, was the suggestion to partner with government ministries, like Education and Environment, and agencies like Plunket.

The thorny issue of whether NZ On Air funding should go only to free-to-air channels divided the producer panel. Phillips and Morrell, whose strands include *Sticky TV*, *The Go Show*, *What Now?* and *The Erin Simpson Show*, were in favour of free-to-air provision (plus websites), given funding constraints and democratic access. By contrast drama producer Dave Gibson was keen to find commissions for stand alone, exportable co-produced drama and Sky children's channels like Nickelodeon looked increasingly promising sources of such commissions.

FUNDING: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD AUDIENCE

There had been a gap in new early childhood initiatives since the 2005 TVNZ commissioning of three series of *The Go Show* (Pickled Possum), which the TVNZ commissioner had hoped would grow into a perennial replacement for *Play School*. *The Go Show* boasts a long shelf life, having had 5,000 plays so far, a record for any NZ On Air production.

Renewed energy was put into commissioning new early childhood content and NZ On Air sought out early childhood proposals from producers with a track record. In 2008 TV3 commissioned two series of the 10 minute long *Action Central* (Pickled Possum) in which Rob the presenter and three animated figures Buzzer, Jump and Tiny encouraged children 'to get off the sofa and move their bodies'.

The search for a substantial new 30 minute early childhood programme bore fruit after lengthy discussions between TVNZ, NZ On Air and producers. In 2009 *Tiki Tour* won funding of \$2.4 million.

Tiki Tour utilised a ground-breaking mix of animation, live action and all New Zealand's official languages – English, Maori and New Zealand sign language. Two hosts 'introduce the live action segments, interact with a team of animated characters and invite young viewers to climb aboard the Tiki Tour bus to participate in games, stories, songs, dancing and activities.' Its ambitious aim is to enable young viewers to 'visit real New Zealand locations while learning maths, science, technology, social science, the arts and health' (Flux Animation 2011).

NZ On Air described the production team for *Tiki Tour*, as a 'dream team' because it brought together Mary Phillips, executive producer and director from Pickled Possum, who had produced child-centred television for a range of New Zealand channels (TV2, TV3, TV4 and TVNZ6/Kidzone 24 on Sky), and Brent Chambers, the founder of Flux animation, who had trained under Disney before creating (amongst other international work) award winning New Zealand children's animations (*Staines Down Drains*, *The Adventures of Massey Ferguson* and *Tamatoa*).

The complex production linked studio work in Christchurch and Flux animation studios in Auckland. The show presented technical challenges for animators which were solved by the innovative use of imported Toon Boom Harmony animation software, thus enabling 75 hours of animation to be completed within a tight budget (Flux Animation 2011). Production in the Christchurch studios was put in jeopardy after the February 2011 earthquake with the studio off limits within 'the redzone', but the team, under the seasoned supervision of producer Anne Williams (*What Now?*, *Being Eve*, *The Go Show*, *Kidzone*) battled on to record 154 half hour episodes around the aftershocks.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL AGED AUDIENCE

Short run half hour programmes funded for the primary audience on TVNZ included another series of *Let's Get Inventin'* (Luke Nola and Friends), the sports show *Small Blacks* (TVNZ Cereal TV), *Cool Kids Cooking* (Top Shelf), a guide to work *Just the Job* (Dave Mason Productions) and a show about Kiwi role-models, *Operation Hero* (Gibson Group). MediaWorks won funding for the half hour *Let's Play* (Quick TV/ Tony Palmer).

NZ On Air's policy of not funding programmes if they were going to be scheduled against other NZ On Air funded content continued to provide demographic and stylistic variety within children's programmes. The 2007 afternoon line up illustrates the complementary scheduling in the afterschool strands on TV1 and TV3. *Sticky TV* (Pickled Possum) was first up on TV3. Producer Mary Phillips brought a strong commitment to child-centred content and worked closely with the off-peak programmer at TV3, Ben Quinn, to broker limited commercial content in the first half hour, after which *Sticky TV* evolved into a presenter-led 'zone' around imported material. *WNTV*, the weekday spin off of *What Now?* (Whitebait) and *Studio 2* (TVNZ with Taylormade) then followed in sequence on TV2.

The funding in 2008 of *The Erin Simpson Show* (Whitebait) on TV2 for an older 'tween' 9-14 year old age group necessitated a reshuffle that saw elements of TV2's *Studio 2* (and its innovative thehub.tv) dropped at 4.30 to make space.

The Erin Simpson Show was the first new weekday afternoon children's strand for some years and marked a new approach to the elusive 'tween' age group (9-14 years) which was understood to be passionately engaged in news about fashion, entertainment and music brands. The host of the show, Erin Simpson, played the role of an expert informant who links kids with their favourite personalities and popular cultural icons. The show's commercial partnerships are chosen to further signify that the show is attuned to breaking news about consumer culture. Extensive use of social networking and an interactive website create a sense of 24/7 engagement with the weekday show.

Producer Janine Morrell expressed the widely shared market anxiety about this age group when she observed that you need to 'serve tweens where they can be found, in popular culture'. Tweens seemed to present an entirely new challenge for producers because 'they don't tell you what they do want, but they do tell you what they don't like and turn off' (Zanker 2011 a). NZ On Air stated that they loved the show because it targeted 'young people who don't want to be called a Kiwi or a kid', and yet attempted to treat young New Zealanders as citizens with strong views on issues (NZ On Air 2008 b).

YOUTH AUDIENCES

Another innovative concept, *I Am TV*, which replaced the long-running *Mai Time*, was funded in 2007 to target rangatahi on TV2. Producer Anahera Higgins had a more optimistic perspective on the appeal of indigenous culture. Yes, tweens were attracted to global consumer culture but she viewed it as a rite of passage rather than as a destination. She argued that just because young people refuse to 'Geo fence' (restrict viewing to New Zealand content) and insist on exploring their local identity within the wider global context does not mean that they are not increasingly proud of their particular origins in the South Pacific. In her words tweens may say 'We want the latest, the fastest the coolest... people telling us what is hot' but older teens are more attracted to 'slightly cooler stuff that we (ourselves) create'. She engaged young reporters to present local news, and reports about performances and music. The programme, made within TVNZ, brokered an innovative online relationship with Bebo who hosted an interactive site for videos, polls and graffiti (a relationship which was a global first according to TVNZ). Unfortunately Bebo has not thrived as a social networking platform.

DRAMA

The funding of *Paradise Café* continued a growing tradition of creative co-production deals, this time brokered between the Gibson Group and Initial (part of the Endemol Group). *Paradise Café* drew on creative talent from New Zealand as well as the exoticism of its South Pacific location in order to tell a classic story of teenagers facing trouble and saving the day. Young friends run a cafe in Raratonga and unwittingly let loose sea ghosts that cause an environmental disaster. It appeared on the BBC and TV2 in 2008. A second series screened in 2011.

Kaitangata Twitch (Production Shed) perhaps best illustrates the creative ways in which NZ On Air has worked recently with other funders in order to enable the production of powerful bi-cultural drama. Yvonne McKay, the executive producer, argues passionately that drama enables New Zealand children to be inspired to think about themselves and she tenaciously built a funding structure for the drama series drawing on funding from (amongst others) NZ On Air, Te Mangai Paho and the Maori Television Service. In 2010 *Kaitangata Twitch* became the highest rating programme to date for Maori Television (beating news).

The drama, adapted from a Margaret Mahy story, draws on the skills of Dunedin's Taylormade Animation who recreate the Governor's Bay rock faces as a place defended by spiritual guardians. The scriptwriters Gavin Strawhan, Michael Bennett and Briar Grace-Smith describe an environment where overlaps between Maori and Pakeha worlds are richly evoked.

It was courageous of NZ On Air to back McKay's vision because its audience on Maori Television was low in terms of the preferred television audience reach for NZ On Air. McKay has sold the programme into a range of countries, and launched the DVD in 2011. She praises the 2007 recoupment deal (see p 40) for providing an incentive for producers to sell programmes into a range of countries and media. In 2010 *Kaitangata Twitch* won the Platinum Remi Award at the Houston WorldFest as well as three awards at the 2010 New Zealand Qantas Film and Television Awards. Also in 2010 it reached the finals of the preeminent children's award The Prix Jeunesse. In 2011 it was a finalist at the Kidscreen Awards and won the Sir Julius Vogel Award for best Dramatic Presentation.

Shows funded by NZ On Air on TV2 also drew on other sources of funding. *Cool Kids Cooking* (Topshelf) was made with extra funding from an Auckland district health board and *Activate* (Quick TV) won extra funding from SPARC as part of its Healthy Eating, Healthy Action initiative. Other shows adding to diversity include *Just the Job* (Dave Mason) a careers show, and *Operation Hero* (Gibson Group).

MULTI-MEDIA INITIATIVES

Innovation has been at the core of children's television, in part because of slim budgets. The first New Zealand interactive television happened via phone-in on *What Now?* in the early 1980s. A combination of CGI and live presenters were experimented with in *Squirt*. Experimental digital production linkages between Christchurch and Auckland enabled *Tiki Tour*.

It is no surprise, therefore, to find that websites were attached to long-running strands years before NZ On Air digital initiatives became possible in 2008. These were funded out of other elements within production budgets, or in association with broadcaster websites. Ian Taylor, head of Animation Research Ltd in Dunedin, who was behind the digital 3D technology in *Squirt*, devised a sophisticated interactive web concept for *Studio 2*, thehub.tv, which took interactivity to a new level. Thehub.tv offered a platform for children to respond to on screen content and upload their own. Children's shows like *Sticky TV* and *What Now?* developed websites which reflected their particular programme cultures and encouraged interaction with presenters and content on the show.

I Am TV provided perhaps the most creative online initiative with its Bebo components. This has been discussed above p 85.

THE 2008 DIGITAL CONTENT PARTNERSHIP FUND

This fund, set up in 2008, at last enabled NZ On Air to fund innovative media experiences for children and young people that extended beyond television.

AEF 360 (Greenstone Pictures), was one of three successful proposals in the first round of the Digital Partnership funding. This enabled an online extension of the TV2 cult show *Amazing Extraordinary Friends*. As NZ On Air put it 'Users can upload their own superhero stories, create storyboards and watch new video content including new drama 'mini-sodes' based on AEF characters, as well as hook into the series. It's a fun interactive experience that links the audience with each other and the show's cast and crew' (NZ On Air 2008 a).

Reservoir Hill (KHFmedia) was funded from the second 2009 Digital Innovation Fund and was not originally broadcast - it streamed from the TVNZ website. A version was broadcast some time later. Creators David Stubbs and Thomas Robins perceived a gap in locally produced series aimed at youth: the 'Twilight generation' of 'those who wot ratha txt each otha thn spk, hail their Bebo pages and read the miraculously popular series of vampire books called *Twilight*' (Smith, 2009). It was designed to be 'as dark as *Twilight* and as bitchy as *Gossip Girl*' and to fill 'the slither of untapped space lying between scripted drama, video gaming and reality television'. Viewers interacted with the main character by sending texts that warned her about imminent threats to her safety and offered advice as to how she should react to other characters. Viewers thus had power to influence later plot lines.

It won New Zealand's first International Digital Emmy Award on the grounds that it 'masterfully demonstrated how to enhance viewers' multi-platform experiences' (Stevens 2010). This non-linear funding decision opens up questions about what young people may prefer as options for delivery in the future, although, for now, broadcast television programmes remain critical for reaching audiences.

Both these winners of Digital Partnership funding were supported by critical TVNZ partnerships. It helped that their creative goals matched the commercial strategic desire of TVNZ to place their content 'on every screen'. It is important to note, however, that this positioning statement did not come from the desire to create new public spaces for young citizens, as did the digital initiatives of the ABC in Australia, but rather from a desire to recruit young media consumers in very uncertain times for national media companies.

CONCLUSION

Certain themes recur over the two decades of NZ On Air funding of children's television. Most problems relate to the media marketplace, where children's programmes can be viewed as an opportunity cost by beleaguered commercial free-to-air broadcasters. At the same time, the funding pool of contestable funding for children's genres severely constrains new programming. There is a difficult balance to be found between on-going funding for trusted strands like *What Now?* and *Sticky TV*, versus the desire to fund the riskier diversity of new stand-alone content.

MAGAZINE TV

Trusted strands for children (*What Now?*, *Sticky TV* and more recently *The Erin Simpson Show*) have their core values managed, and refreshed, by two key executive producers, Janine Morrell (Whitebait) and Mary Phillips (Pickled Possum). These programmes may not have the high profile of other genres but the producers of these strands remain close to their audiences via extensive audience research and their interactive websites.

Both believe in the power of 'live television' to create communities for children as citizens. Morrell also addresses children as consumers who enjoy the latest news about popular culture. Their strands contain a surprising diversity of genres (sport, drama, comedy, cooking shows, talent shows and news) and have demonstrated that they are seeding grounds for future presenters and television craftspeople.

At the same time, these long-living brands are growing interactive local spaces through their websites and associated social networking tools. Children are active 'prosumers' who upload photos, write stories, create video and provide opinions. Twitter use is growing, by children as young as eight, partly because telecommunications companies have made it easy to integrate into texting and children can update Twitter from their cellphones.

The web manager of *What Now?* tracks digital traffic on Saturday mornings: 'You should watch the traffic. It is incredible. You can see what kids like and what they don't like and if something is not there you hear all about it'. Producer Reuben Davison puts the increasing amount of traffic in perspective. 'If you had 60,000 phone-ins you would need 600 people on phones to answer viewers' (Zanker 2011b). 'Whatnownz', the YouTube channel, is growing with over 1,000 subscribers and YouTube views include clips from shows as far back as the 1980s, many digitized by past fans from VHS tapes.

In such ways it can be said that popular children's broadcasting strands are beginning to morph into 24/7 local multimedia spaces and places for children. The enthusiastic use of twitter, texting, the uploading of photos and participation in shows (both when on air and off) illustrate how television strands can become first windows into multimedia content. There are new opportunities for content creation *with* children, as well as the creation of mobile apps, and other playful digital content. These social networking spaces are still dependent on the profile of television strands, but this may change as interactive destinations grow in profile for local children. Such spaces could conceivably outlive the current ecology of free-to-air broadcasting, given its increasingly uncertain commitment to children's content. But, for now, broadcast television remains the critical anchor.

ANIMATION AND DRAMA

Animation and drama remain endangered stand-alone genres, simply because they are expensive, complex to produce and require astute global distribution to make a business case. But New Zealand has a rich tradition of children's fiction (think, for example, of Margaret Mahy and Joy Cowley) and producers of animation and children's drama have drawn on such authors to create productions that are internationally recognized for fresh storytelling and creativity.

Animators like Brent Chambers (Flux) work for commercial and international clients, while creating short run animations for NZ On Air 'on the side'. But digital tools are enabling new cross genre applications for animation. This is best demonstrated by NZ On Air's support of *Tiki Tour*, a co-production between the leading animation studio, Flux animation and child centred Pickled Possum.

Key drama production companies that have negotiated successful co-production television deals include South Pacific Pictures, Greenstone, Gibson Group and, more recently, The Production Shed. Overseas co-funding and sales of drama projects demonstrate that it is possible to serve local children with content that also sells overseas through its universal themes, but development funding is increasingly critical for the success of such ventures. Producers, NZ On Air and broadcasters have brokered a range of pragmatic, and sometimes inspired deals, that have resulted in ground breaking, unstuffy productions for young audiences that have sold overseas, and won prestigious international awards.

Drama projects have been developed on an ad hoc basis, with a range of international co-producers, and one could speculate on an opportunity lost in terms of consistency of international branding of a quality English language product. It remains a specialized and fragile industry that has potential to grow into something bigger with strategic funding. However drama's relegation to low-rating weekend slots, its 'producer driven' concepts and its expense count against the genre.

NEW INITIATIVES BEYOND NZ ON AIR

Richard Taylor (Weta Workshop) has produced recent children's content like *The Wot Wots* and *Jane and the Dragon* with no funding from NZ On Air. Martin Baynton (2011), the author behind these projects, argues that the requirement for broadcaster commissioning for funding from NZ On Air is increasingly irrelevant in the globalizing production market-place. Creative intellectual property and production skills may exist in one country and studio facilities for CGI and animation in another. He encourages local producers to be bold and think beyond New Zealand, while telling New Zealand stories.

Few producers in New Zealand have the deep pockets or profile of Weta Productions as they attempt to broker transnational funding arrangements and distribution networks that embrace all media platforms. Yvonne Mackay (The Production Shed) feels constrained by a funding model that requires that her company draws on the Screen Production Fund or NZ On Air, not both. As a consequence there is insufficient development money to create the high production quality teasers

necessary to pitch to co-producers like the ABC, BBC or CBS. Such potential co-producers necessarily demand that New Zealand producers 'show us more so that we can see what our part is in this creative production' (Mackay 2011).

The time may have come for a radical reconsideration of funding mechanisms for this area of children's production in order to encourage the growth of a specialized but internationally attractive English-speaking children's audio-visual industry in New Zealand. Whether new funding comes in the form of targeted industry development assistance and funding, or as innovative taxes on those who are currently profiting from local arrangements (for example telecommunications companies and broadcasters like Sky) is open for further debate.

IN SUMMARY

One would be hard pressed to find another genre that has grown such a distinguished local and international track record, with the help of NZ On Air. This should be celebrated because it has been brokered by NZ On Air with creative channel commissioners and producers, often against the odds and without channel promotions. NZ On Air has achieved great things by funding dedicated producers who choose to serve local children as citizens, as well as consumers.

CHANGING BROADCASTER PRIORITIES

There are ominous shifts in broadcaster commitment to children's content. The Sunday morning non-commercial zone may be reviewed. Charter requirements around children's provision have been lost and TVNZ's market focus has intensified since the passing of the TVNZ Amendment Act 2011. In the worst scenario TV2 could stop commissioning off-peak programming, which includes children's content. TV3 has stopped screening children's programmes and the only alternative commissioning channel is FOUR, where children's programmes reach a smaller audience. The company itself is under threat of sale. How can NZ On Air continue to provide quality and diversity for children and young people under these circumstances?

Ruth Harley identified in 1991 the threat that NZ On Air still faces as commercial pressures increase for free-to-air broadcasters. What if free-to-air broadcasters choose to not to commission the desirable range of children's programmes required by NZ On Air? Beleaguered commercial broadcasters have the power to say 'we don't want anything on weekend mornings, or after school, we'll just go back to cheap imported cartoons or reruns of *Gilligan's Island*.'

There are also questions around what commercial commissioners believe that children want. As far back as 1997 TVNZ commissioner Geoff Steven opined that:

If I had a choice I would watch Teletubbies over What Now? because the danger of a show like What Now? is that it becomes too earnest, it's like a Christian rock and roll band. You don't rock and roll for Jesus, you rock and roll for the devil and as with Christian rock and roll bands there is a naughtiness there.

Zanker 1999

Children may well enjoy popular Disney or Nickelodeon offerings but children who have access to global media content that is produced without their particular interest in mind can also be said to be victims of second-hand media consumption, because the media content at their disposal seldom reflects their immediate cultural contexts.

They may have qualified as global consumer citizens thanks to the purchasing power of their parents and guardians, but culturally, they remain consumer subjects, and must attune their palates to the dictates of undomesticated foreign media dishes.

Nyamnjoh 2002

The key problem is that there is no leverage in the deregulated media environment of any requirement for broadcasters to commission local children's television content (and associated multimedia spaces). There is no longer a dedicated lobbyist for children's media provision and the children's content on TVNZ6, the short lived digital public service channel, is now behind the pay wall on Kidzone24 on the Sky TV platform.

NEW PROVIDERS?

We return to Loughnan's observation that children's funding decisions have always been driven by the audience NZ On Air is required to serve under the Act and the question of 'How we can reach them?' This is a question asked frequently by NZ On Air.

In 2011 Sky's pay TV service reached 50% penetration into New Zealand homes, and was trending to make deeper inroads. Ratings indicate that TV2 remains the strongest individual channel for children, and FOUR remains an important niche, but Sky's share of the 5-14 year old age group has grown steadily since the launch of Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network in the mid-1990s and seems set to continue to grow. The cumulative viewership of the Sky children's pay channels now exceeds viewers on TV2.

But ratings are an unreliable means of judging success in terms of delivery of children's content. Measures of appreciation and the on-going value of local culture and information in children's lives are currently lacking. Only through such measures can we have a clear picture of how children use local content as they develop understandings of themselves and the world they live in.

The current use of ratings for measuring programme effectiveness does raise the question: Is it time to consider delivering content to children via pay television?

Certainly the monopoly pay platform provider, Sky, appreciates the value of local content for branding within the globalizing media environment, as demonstrated by its collaboration with TVNZ to create the Kidzone 24 pay channel. This move sets a precedent because it locks local children's content funded by NZ On Air behind the pay wall. But the Kidzone24 content originally funded by NZ On Air consists of replays and such replays of local children's public service content on pay providers might be viewed as a useful means of extending audience reach.

But any original commissions funded by NZ On Air on pay television, for example for Nickelodeon, disenfranchise children who have no access to pay television. Furthermore such commissions divert public money to global corporate children's channels, thus positioning them in the local market against less well-promoted local media.

Some may argue that NZ On Air has always had to work with commercial channels and that a preferable solution may be for children's content (either reversioned or subtitled) to be delivered via the channel that some commentators already view as the default public broadcaster, Maori Television. NZ On Air and Te Mangai Paho have already worked together on innovative ways of reaching the child audience via subtitling and reversioning local content across a range of channels, but the current audience reach of Maori Television, as well as its Maori language remit, remain issues for NZ On Air.

It is important to remember that, for now, children's free-to-air television viewing remains remarkably robust and that the 'bread and butter' strands, with dedicated destinations in the schedule, continue to have passionate fans, despite limited adult appeal. A 2010 public perception research survey found that more than two thirds of people believe locally funded television content is important to all New Zealanders, and 80% think it is important to screen locally made children's shows (NZ On Air 2010).

As NZ On Air reviews its future as an effective funder of local stories it could view children's provision as the 'canary in the cage'. Difficulties with children's provision may become emblematic of the future viability of delivering NZ On Air objectives via free-to-air television.

CHAPTER 11

SPECIAL INTERESTS AND MINORITIES

For the special interest audiences these programmes serve, knowing that the programmes are there, that their cultures are seen as valuable enough to have their own television programmes, and that these programmes have the potential to create greater understanding in the wider community, is of primary importance to them.

NZ On Air 2002

INTRODUCTION

The Broadcasting Act 1989 was quite specific on the Broadcasting Commission's responsibilities towards particular groups and minorities. Among the functions of the Commission, detailed in the celebrated section 36 (c) of the Act, it must "ensure that a range of broadcasts is available to provide for the interests of –

- (i) Women
- (ii) Children
- (iii) Persons with disabilities
- (iv) Minorities in the community including ethnic minorities."

The Act was amended in 2000 to include provision for youth, and to require a range of broadcasts reflecting diverse religious and ethical beliefs.

The inclusion of women here is something of a curiosity that can be put down to lobbying from a number of influential women's groups during the Bill's progress through Parliament. As NZ On Air evolved its programming strategy, it chose not to single out particular programmes as providing for the interests of women. Instead it worked to ensure sufficient diversity, in drama and documentary programmes in particular, such that women's stories and women themselves were adequately represented in funded programming.

On the other hand, children were seen as an audience, or series of audiences, deserving a distinct funding category. The strategy for children's programmes, and the notable achievements in this area, are covered in Chapter 10.

This chapter will cover programmes for minorities and what became known as special interests. Coverage of the arts and performance started under this heading before NZ On Air created a separate funding category for the arts in 1998. It is worth noting that special interests and the arts combined are a significant funding category, spending much the same as children's, including children's drama (see the genre allocations graph p 41).

It is in respect of this category that NZ On Air comes closest to fulfilling a public broadcasting remit in the conventional sense, funding programmes of little interest to commercial broadcasters. Programmes for special interests and minorities are essentially non-commercial, in that the broadcaster can expect little or no advertising revenue from them. Consequently these programmes usually play off-peak, often on Sunday mornings, and most are fully funded or almost fully funded by NZ On Air, with minimal contributions from the broadcasters.

THE CORE PROGRAMMES

There are a number of communities that have been served continuously since the early years of NZ On Air. The Pacific Island community has been served by *Tagata Pasifika* since 1990, with funding for around 40 half hour programmes each year. Pacific Island youth gained their own programme, *Pacific Beat Street*, on TV3 in 2005, to be replaced by *Fresh* in 2010.

Asia Dynamic was introduced in 1994, changing its name to *Asia Down Under* in 2001. By 2011 NZ On Air decided that the Asian audience was better served by specialist channels, both pay and free-to-air, and discontinued their funding for this community.

For those with disabilities, *Four in Ten* began in 1995, with 20 funded half hour programmes. It was followed by *Inside Out* in 1998, expanding to 40 half hour programmes, and later *Attitude* in 2005.

Perhaps surprisingly the Christian community was not specified as requiring provision under the Act. However NZ On Air resolved to fund *Praise Be* from the start, with 43 half hour programmes in 1990, together with four Church outside broadcasts. Like *Tagata Pasifika*, *Praise Be* has been funded every year through the history of NZ On Air.

Programmes for other minorities came on stream gradually. For the gay and lesbian audience, *express Report* was screened on the Horizon network from 1996 to 1997. It was followed by *Queer Nation* on TVNZ from 1998 to 2005, and later programmes *The Outhouse* and *Kiwifruit*.

Even before provision for youth was added to the Act, there were a number of programmes targeted at the youth audience. For example, NZ On Air was funding four such programmes in 1998 – *The Drum* (TV4/TV3), *Ice TV* (TV4/TV3), *Mai Time* (TVNZ) and *Squeeze* (TVNZ).

Mention should also be made of the closest approach to access television, *Open Door*, a programme that invites applications from the community – individuals or groups – for its topics. It gives the participants full editorial control, offering the opportunity to let people have their own say in their own way. The programme has been broadcast by TV3 off and on since 1993, moving into its 12th series in 2011.

CAPTIONING

For those with hearing disabilities, *News Review*, an existing TVNZ signed programme recapping the week's news, was funded in 1990. By the following year it was decided that a better approach was to subtitle *News at 6*, and *News Review* was dropped. The captioning of programmes expanded steadily, with some TV3 programmes being added in 1994.

It may not be generally appreciated that NZ On Air has funded the entire captioning service, including the captioning of imported programmes. It has also funded the capital equipment for sub-titling for both TVNZ and TV3. By 2011, it was spending \$1.65m on captioning programmes. Hours captioned had increased steadily over the past decade, from around 80 per week in 2000 to 240 in 2011. NZ On Air does not determine which programmes are sub-titled – the broadcasters choose after consulting with the community, and in light of audience preferences.

In 2011 a significant new service was introduced, for people with visual impairment. This service, known as audio description, allows those with visual impairment to follow television programmes more closely by providing an audio track that describes the non verbal on-screen action. Pilot programmes for this service included *Coronation Street*, and *Nothing Trivial*.

REVIEW OF SPECIAL INTEREST PROGRAMMES

In line with its policy of reviewing its various areas of activity, in 2001 NZ On Air commissioned research into the effectiveness of its special interest programmes. The programmes examined were *Tagata Pasifika*, *Inside Out*, *Queer Nation*, *Asia Down Under*, *Praise Be* and subtitling. The purpose of the research was to establish whether these programmes were reaching their intended audiences, and how well they were being received.

The overall conclusion of the research was that special interest programming was a valuable use of NZ On Air funding, even when the ratings might suggest otherwise.

The ratings performance of these programmes that, by their very nature, are targeted principally at minorities in the community is of secondary importance. This research has affirmed that reflecting the interests and perspectives of these groups on screen is an important use of NZ On Air's funding.

NZ On Air 2002

NZ On Air also concluded there was "huge room" for improvement in the timeslots for these programmes, and that there were different options to make them more accessible both to their target audience and to the general audience. Complaints from those surveyed in the research had focused on timeslots, lack of promotion, and issues around the content, tone and treatment within the programmes. NZ On Air did not believe that these special interest programmes belonged in prime time, but their place in the off-peak schedule was of course a decision for the broadcaster.

CASE STUDY: ATTITUDE

Following this review, NZ On Air put several of the special interest programme areas up for tender. In the area of serving those with disabilities, a new programme *Attitude* began in 2005, screening on TVNZ early on Sunday morning. By 2011 *Attitude* was receiving the highest level of funding in the special interest category - \$1.6m for 40 half hour programmes.

In establishing *Attitude*, producer Robyn Scott-Vincent was aware of the criticisms of the previous programme *Inside Out* that had surfaced in the review, specifically that it lacked energy and variety and that the content neither hooked nor held viewers. She did her own research about what the disabled community wanted to see. "Everything they kept saying was about attitude, so that's where the title came from. It was just obvious" (Scott-Vincent 2011). She had a clear sense that the programme had to present positive images of people with disabilities.

She also resolved that the programme was not just aimed at the disabled community, it also had to attract the general viewer.

Every single story had to run through two filters – is it going to serve the viewer? Is it going to serve the community? We were really strategic and conscious of that.

Scott-Vincent 2011

In contrast to the official NZ On Air position, her experience was that ratings did matter. "We were acutely aware of the need to drive it for the network, that we did not fail ratings-wise. We never lost sight of that" (Scott-Vincent 2011).

Scott-Vincent's issues were not with NZ On Air, whose support she describes as fantastic, but with TVNZ. One area was promotion. Because *Attitude* was getting no on air promotion, they sent promos direct to the TVNZ web team. This system was later axed, apparently because TVNZ had no time to upload the promos, much to the chagrin of *Attitude*'s producer.

It is that sort of response that makes me feel they just have the content because they have to rather than any sense of valuing content that might truly shape the culture of the community...which of course NZ On Air hopes to achieve. Overall I feel NZ On Air is often thwarted in its efforts by the power of the network in calling the shots.

Scott-Vincent 2011

She also felt that the network culture did not value diversity, and that special interest programmes were not accorded proper recognition.

The network has us totally typecast as special interest, low grade, you sit down there. I don't believe that the programmers even look at what we are making, that they have any concept of the standard of what we are doing. Because it's free - they don't pay one cent towards it. No matter how hard we work to get significant content (that even Sunday wants to screen) our perceived value as a programme does not seem to change.

Scott-Vincent 2011

Attitude, like most special interest programmes, is fully funded by NZ On Air, with no licence fee paid by the broadcaster. But the network approach also raises a concern for the future, in that TVNZ without a Charter might choose to reduce if not abandon its commitment to special interest programming, and seek to redirect the NZ On Air funding for this category.

It's a big chunk of money; I'm aware of comments made that some want that money going into other things they see as priority. That's where the pressure is going to come –they will want that money to make drama, or entertainment, but not special interest.

Scott-Vincent 2011

Obviously such an outcome would leave NZ On Air in a difficult position, still responsible under the Broadcasting Act for the funding of programmes for minorities, but unable to compel broadcasters to screen such programmes.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The increasing diversity of New Zealand communities prompted one NZ On Air Board member to push for the setting up of a Special Interest Committee in February 2008. The intention was to find ways to reflect the emerging multiple ethnicities in New Zealand. To this end an Ethnic Diversity Broadcasting Forum was held in June 2009, with the theme of looking ahead to New Zealand in 2020 – how the demography would have changed and how to represent those changes in the broadcasting media.

Even before the Forum, TVNZ agreed to commission a series of stories under the title *Minority Voice*, lauded by NZ On Air as introducing the audience to New Zealanders rarely seen on screen. “Each week, through a collection of personal stories, a cross-section of migrant and refugee groups explore issues and share their experiences as new New Zealanders” (NZ On Air 2008a).

Following the Forum, NZ On Air decided to broaden their mix a little. A new series *NZ Stories* was funded, 25 half hour programmes for TVNZ on Sunday morning, with diversity the catch cry, not just for content, but also in production. NZ On Air selected three production companies through which ideas were to be channelled and programmes made. In June 2011 NZ On Air actively sought proposals for another new series, intended to explore the stories of the increasing diversity of communities in New Zealand. Here was another example of NZ On Air effectively going to the production sector and saying we have funding for a project we want to see on screen - compete with your ideas. The result was funding for *Neighbourhood*, a series of half hour programmes intended to introduce the audience to an interesting community each week.

It has been NZ On Air policy since 2008 that all programmes that are 100% funded may be repeated on regional TV stations for no charge. Some programmes have been re-screened on as many as five regional channels, as well as TVNZ 7. This can be seen as a useful example of seeking to expand a limited audience, as well as providing content for the hard-pressed regional channels.

ARTS, CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE

Arts programmes were not specified under Section 36 (c) of the Broadcasting Act, but were seen by NZ On Air as a necessary part of fulfilling the remit to promote New Zealand identity and culture. A varied range of arts programmes were funded by NZ On Air from the start, embracing both regular series on TVNZ and TV3, and one-off events or productions.

Among the early series screened on TVNZ were *10 AM*, with \$1.5m of funding for 20 programmes of 46 minutes, and *Sunday* which received funding of \$1m for 22 hour long programmes. TV3 ran *The Edge* for three series from 1993, and then took over the title of *Sunday* from TVNZ. These magazine programmes usually screened in the commercial-free zone of Sunday mornings.

By 1996 TVNZ had expanded its repertoire with the documentary series *Work of Art* (referred to above p 61), and *For Art's Sake*. Later titles included *Mercury Lane* and *The Big Art Trip*, then *Backch@t*, *Frontseat* and *Artsville*.

NZ On Air did not appear to have a coherent strategy in the area of arts programming. For the most part, if any party was driving the content it was the production companies, among whom the Gibson Group was the most prominent. Dave Gibson explains his approach:

We were the ones going “how do you make the arts work on television.”Our ideal was to integrate arts, politics, intelligent conversation, current affairs, into something slightly different. I'm not calling it arts by stealth, but it was a way of putting a current affairs element into the arts.

Gibson 2011

Backch@t was perhaps the best example of this approach. Described as having an arts and issues focus, and presented by the feisty Bill Ralston, it ran for three seasons from 1998 before it was dropped by TVNZ, despite awards and favourable critical reviews. It was replaced later by *Frontseat*, which took a broadly similar current affairs style and ran for five seasons from 2004 to 2008.

A different approach was taken with the introduction of the *Artsville* strand in 2007. This was to be a series of documentaries, many featuring significant figures in the arts, such as architect Sir Miles Warren, photographer Brian Brake, poet Denis Glover or composer John Psathas. A number of different companies produced the documentaries, with the co-ordination of the strand being the responsibility of TVNZ who had introduced the strand originally paid for from Charter funding. The programme moved to NZ On Air funding for its third and fourth season, with NZ On Air becoming more active in overseeing the strand. *Artsville* screened in a late-night slot on Sunday on TV One, around 10.30pm, but by 2010 this form of arts programme had fallen out of favour with TVNZ.

TV3 found a way to move the arts into prime time with *The Secret Lives of Dancers*, a behind-the-scenes observational documentary series on the lives of dancers with the Royal New Zealand Ballet. Screening at 8pm on Tuesdays, it ran for eight half hour programmes from August 2010, with NZ On Air funding of \$716,565, and a second series was commissioned in 2011. TV3 acknowledged that scheduling the programme in prime time was risky:

We loved the idea and while we initially thought it would be off-peak, the combination of great talent and great production meant we were happy to give it a go in prime time, and it's a risk that paid off... it had a strong regular following.

Woodfield 2011

So by 2010, the content of funded arts programmes had evolved from the regular arts magazine programmes on both networks to a more innovative and focused approach that could even include prime time. But the traditional arts documentary should be considered an endangered species.

ONE-OFF PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMES

There have been a number of one-off performance programmes sprinkled through the years. Notable examples from the early period included *Jean - The Ballet* (the life of our most famous aviatrix Jean Batten), *Bitter Calm* (Christopher Blake's New Zealand opera), several programmes featuring Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and others featuring Sir Howard Morrison or Dave Dobbyn.

In later years there were programmes featuring the Finn brothers, Goldenhorse, John Rowles and the Topp Twins. 2006 saw a rare treat – two ballets from the Royal New Zealand Ballet, *Nutcracker* and *The Wedding*.

Arts funding also extended to various award events, including the Wearable Arts Awards, the NZ Music Awards and the Qantas Film and TV Awards.

ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES

Although entertainment or performance programming is not mentioned in the Act, NZ On Air was concerned not to neglect this area of cultural experience. In 1997 the agency supported a second series of a variety talent quest under the banner of *Showcase II*, a run of 16 one hour programmes on TV One funded at just over \$1m. The programme, described as presenting the cream of undiscovered New Zealand musical talent, proved to be a ratings winner, topping the list of NZ On Air-funded programmes that year. *Showcase* ran for three years.

1997 was a year rich in entertainment. NZ On Air also supported *Young Entertainers*, a series of 13 one hour programmes on TV2.

As if to underline their commitment to popular culture and to the younger audience, NZ On Air contributed to local content within several series of *Top of the Pops* on TV2 (2004 and 2005). Funding per programme was relatively modest (around \$4,000 per hour) but the high number of hours (192) boosted the total number of hours funded under the arts category in those years up to record levels.

NZ IDOL

But the most contentious of NZ On Air's decisions on funding entertainment programmes was its contribution to *NZ Idol* in 2004. NZ On Air agreed to top up TVNZ's budget for the series by \$450,000, having been persuaded that unless this shortfall was met, the programme would not get to air. The payment, at first described as a loan to TVNZ, but later changed to a "funding agreement", was made by NZ On Air on the basis that it would be first in line to be repaid if the show made a profit.

Opposition MPs milked the story for all it was worth, claiming that NZ On Air's decision went against its policy of not funding overseas formats "due to their proven performance and relative commercial viability." NZ On Air's Chief Executive, Jo Tyndall, conceded that it had been a difficult decision, but argued that *NZ Idol* was more than just a talent show: "it showed ordinary New Zealanders doing extraordinary things" (Tyndall 2004). The Minister of Broadcasting was fulsome in his support for NZ On Air: "*NZ Idol* unquestionably meshed with NZ On Air's brief to promote and foster expressions of New Zealand culture and identity" (Maharey 2004).

The arrangement was that NZ On Air would be repaid from the income from text and phone voting. After some wrangling with TVNZ a sum of money was repaid to NZ On Air, with the result that NZ On Air's final contribution was \$244,000.

EXPAND FUNDING CRITERIA?

The episode highlighted the issue of where NZ On Air should draw the line in respect of the types of programme it would fund. Some in the industry believe that NZ On Air should be funding more entertainment programmes. John Barnett, Chief Executive of South Pacific Pictures, points to the tradition of talent shows on our television:

I think you could make a bloody good argument that New Zealand had a long history of entertainment shows that have really showcased New Zealand talent and they have been enormously popular with audiences and they have done great things for New Zealand.

Barnett 2010

But he says that such shows had become so expensive in recent years that broadcasters cannot afford to make them without support. Both he and Bettina Hollings, former programme commissioner at both TVNZ and TV3 before heading her own production company, believe that if NZ On Air feels that such programmes are less of a priority because entertainment is not a genre specified in the Broadcasting Act, then perhaps the Act needs to be changed:

This country is the only country in the western world without a talent show. Apparently NZ On Air won't be funding a talent show because the word entertainment isn't in their bloody Act... I think it is time to review what was created in 1989 and where we are today and say hang on, this Act doesn't quite match how the audience is behaving and what we need on TV.

Hollings 2010

Others in the production community agree. Julie Christie, from Eyeworks, believes that NZ On Air's position is reducing its impact on the television market:

Who says that a big studio entertainment show does not reflect our cultural identity? – it absolutely does but they (NZ On Air) will not fund as they think the broadcasters should – who says? Not the Act but NZ On Air. So their interpretation of the Act has at times limited their impact on the market and certainly narrowed the genres now being produced.

Christie 2011

NZ On Air accepts that popular entertainment programmes do reflect and develop the creative aspect of New Zealand's culture and identity. The agency's policy was summed up in this way:

The series NZ On Air has previously supported have usually met two or more of our funding criteria, i.e. in addition to culture and identity they have either promoted New Zealand music, been targeted to one of our special audience groups, incorporated regional elements or been of such high cost that a subsidy was warranted. What they generally haven't been are local versions of overseas formats, programmes at the reality end of the entertainment spectrum, or series which derive their 'entertainment' value from the detrimental exploitation of the participants.

NZ On Air 2008b

In December 2011, after the above interviews had been conducted, the Board of NZ On Air decided that it would contribute funding to a local talent show *New Zealand's Got Talent*, to be screened on TVNZ. It agreed to funding of \$1.6m for 13 episodes, the funding being capped at a maximum of 50% of the production budget. TVNZ will pay the format fee from its resources and acknowledged that the big budget production would need funding from multiple commercial partners.

This decision suggests a loosening of the 2008 policy articulated above. *New Zealand's Got Talent* will certainly be a local version of a "globally successful entertainment show" (TVNZ 2012) and could be seen as being at the reality end of the entertainment spectrum.

CONCLUSION

Talent shows may be one category of programme that NZ On Air has found it problematic to fund, but in any event such programmes are clearly destined for the mainstream audience in prime time. Any NZ On Air funding would be a subsidy to a commercially valuable programme.

The situation with the programmes for special interests and minorities is quite different and their existence is clearly threatened by the increasingly commercial nature of the media landscape. As far back as February 1999, when it was evident that TVNZ (both channels) was being prepared for sale, the then Chief Executive of NZ On Air, Jo Tyndall, sounded this warning:

Policy-makers would need to consider who would broadcast the programmes for minority interests which TVNZ currently screens....even the offer of heavily subsidised (minority interest) programmes, including children's programmes, would be unlikely to tempt a commercial broadcaster if they could not be seen to fit with the channel's target demographic and brand.

Tyndall 1999

This view is equally appropriate in 2011, when TVNZ has been stripped of Charter obligations and given a fully commercial remit, and when there is uncertainty over the continuation of the ad-free zone on Sunday mornings. Whether TVNZ is ultimately sold or not, the key question is how long it will be willing to devote its Sunday morning schedule to programmes on which it seemingly places little value. Not to mention the point made by one producer above, that it would like to see the funding for these programmes moved to other genres that it sees as higher priority.

CHAPTER 12

RADIO

INTRODUCTION

The radio ecology is substantially different to television. While there are the commercial networks that tend to dominant the airwaves and, in New Zealand's case, a public service radio presence, most of the hundreds of other radio broadcasting stations in the country belong to a range of genres including community radio, ethnic radio, religious radio, access radio and a plethora of small transmitters carrying messages, stories and music that represent diversity not only geographically but culturally, socially and politically. Thus, on the one hand, radio provides substantial profits for large media conglomerates operating networks; on the other hand, it provides a voice for the powerless, the oppressed and the marginalised.

New Zealand was an early adopter of radio technology and political interests and social pressures have seen considerable variation in its radio system over the years. Indeed, it has been suggested that the extent and frequency of legislative changes to the broadcasting ecology of the country are among the most extensive in the Western world. This has been aided by the country's political structure – a uni-cameral legislature, a short three year election cycle and no strongly embedded constitutional documents.

The arrival of pirate radio in the late 1960s unsettled the only existing broadcaster, the state-owned New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC). Successive governments wrestled with what to do about private broadcasting but following the major legislative changes of the Muldoon National administration in 1976 the radio landscape up until deregulation was relatively settled. Radio New Zealand (RNZ), the radio arm of the renamed state-owned Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ), continued to dominate the airwaves with its commercial and non-commercial stations but there was a steady rise in private radio competition with the number of private broadcasters increasing from just nine in 1976 to 22 by 1984. The legislation at that time prohibited private radio networking so RNZ had a monopoly on networking and network branding.

The 1970s was a period of rapid social change. For example gender issues were being raised with a series of Women's Conventions throughout the country, issues of Maori sovereignty and the survival of the Maori language were increasingly debated and there was renewed interest in the role of radio as a platform for community participation and communication.

Public broadcasting made attempts to engage with these issues. RNZ created a form of community access radio using 'down time' on the parliamentary channel to provide opportunities for a range of community groups to broadcast. The programme quickly became recognised as a genuinely alternative voice in radio and an opportunity for a variety of different and unconventional ideas and opinions to be publicly expressed. The government, in consultation with Maori, encouraged the BCNZ to provide radio for Maori and in 1982 the Aotearoa Maori Radio Board was established and began broadcasting from Auckland. RNZ also assisted a local Maori radio station in Wellington, Te Upoko o te ika, to get to air.

This was the radio environment that greeted the new Broadcasting Commission (NZ On Air) when it was established in 1988.

NZ On Air's tasks were broadly spelt out in the 1989 Broadcasting Act. However there were two major differences between the way NZ On Air addressed radio in comparison with television. Firstly NZ On Air was charged with carrying out a number of tasks by Ministerial direction. Minister Jonathan Hunt specifically required NZ On Air to provide funds to support access radio (provide for four existing stations and provide for one new one); Radio for the Print Disabled (\$350,000); National and Concert programmes of Radio New Zealand; Maori broadcasting, both radio and television (to the extent of a minimum level of 6% of income); and to commit to an extension of transmission coverage to communities not receiving a primary radio signal.

Secondly, rather than fund by programme and having some direct control over the nature of the programme, virtually all of radio (the exceptions being student radio and commercial radio, see below) was bulk-funded by organisation, each radio outlet thus having more direct control over programme content and NZ On Air having less.

Soon after its establishment the NZ On Air board split into two 'sub-committees', television and radio. The radio sub-committee set about developing and applying policies to deal with Radio New Zealand, Maori radio, community access radio, and remote transmission coverage. It was the stated intent to provide, within three years, 'every community of 1,000 or more [with] a primary radio signal' and every town greater than 10,000 with the signals of both of Radio New Zealand's networks (NZ On Air, 1989a).

In one sense it could be argued that while most of the money that NZ On Air disburses goes to television programmes, the smaller amount devoted to radio is more significant because if NZ On Air funding was to cease tomorrow there is little doubt that most if not all of the television broadcasters would continue whereas without NZ On Air support (or its equivalent) most if not all the radio stations in the non-commercial sector would cease to exist (see Group Three p 116).

RADIO NEW ZEALAND

At the time of deregulation, the Minister of Broadcasting Jonathan Hunt made clear his expectations of RNZ.

[A] nationwide, non-commercial service providing programmes of the highest quality to as many New Zealanders as possible...comprehensive, independent and impartial national and international news services as well as current affairs programmes...and a varied range of New Zealand programmes including Maori, information, special interest and entertainment programmes not currently provided by other services

Hunt 1989

The principal aims behind the changes in the 1989 Broadcasting Act were increased competition and consumer choice and the separation of commercial broadcasting from non-commercial broadcasting. In other areas of the economy where similar deregulatory policies were being applied the distinction between non-commercial and commercial was relatively clear. When it came to broadcasting however and radio in particular, the situation was murky to say the least. RNZ set up a basic two part structure, commercial (the ZB and ZM networks) and non-commercial (National and Concert). While from the listener's perspective Radio New Zealand's commercial and non-commercial services were clearly differentiated, from the organisational, business and economic perspectives they were much intertwined. Early on NZ On Air expressed discomfort with this. There was a fear that the money given to RNZ for public broadcasting outcomes could 'leak' and, inadvertently or otherwise, become a form of subsidy for the commercial arm.

Thus the early years of NZ On Air saw a fractious relationship between the funding agency and RNZ. While these matters were eventually resolved, a change of government in 1990 saw the public arm of RNZ fall out of favour with politicians, be subjected to restrictive funding policies and eventually be separated from its commercial sibling as a stand-alone public broadcaster. A further change of government in 1999 saw the public broadcaster return to favour but 'flex' its new found 'muscles' by seeking direct funding from government rather than through the agency of NZ On Air. It would be fair to say therefore that it has only been in the latter years that a steady and comfortable relationship has evolved between the two bodies.

NZ On Air commissioned an independent report from consultants Ernst & Young in 1990. Given the Treasury-driven and government supported views at the time that prompted the legislation, the report argued that there were problems with RNZ 'fencing off' public broadcasting costs from commercial activities. This could lead to the possible danger of forms of cross subsidy in both directions, commercial subsidising non-commercial and non-commercial subsidising commercial. Also the existence of just one public broadcaster provided disadvantages that included 'lack of competitiveness'. Ernst & Young pointed out that by legislation SOE objectives were 'commercially driven' and 'do not blend easily with the social objectives of public broadcasting'.

The report identified five key areas of entanglement. They were:

- Assets – the report suggested that RNZ's property and other investments were 'inappropriate for a public sector operation' but possibly 'appropriate for a commercial operation'
- News Service – it was suggested that the non-commercial sector of RNZ was 'bearing an unjustifiable share of the total news costs'
- Debt servicing and overheads – it was claimed that the non-commercial sector of RNZ was 'contributing to the costs of borrowing of the commercial arm'
- Internal transfers – there was an internal 'transfer pricing structure' between sectors that was 'not agreed' as appropriate
- Rate of return – there was a rate of return on non-commercial services which because they were by definition not commercial should 'not apply'.

Ernst & Young 1990

These conclusions reflect much of the early conflict that developed between NZ On Air and RNZ in the years immediately following NZ On Air's establishment and which continued until the late 1990s.

Old 'baggage' (property costs, occupancy costs, accounting policies et al) were carried over from the previous incarnation of the organisation which provided fuel for the debates and tensions between NZ On Air and Radio New Zealand. NZ On Air indicated its 'concern about the high cost' of RNZ, stating that it believed that the services were 'overpriced', and saying this was 'largely due' to structural costs and internal allocations that led to 'excess resources and profit margins'(NZ On Air 1991/1992: 7).

The debate on a rate of return was intense with NZ On Air and RNZ in diametrically opposed corners. NZ On Air believed that there was an inherent contradiction in applying a rate of return to what was by definition a non-commercial activity, whereas RNZ saw the value of its organisation not in its assets but in the income earning potential of those assets. Both RNZ and the government were of the opinion that a rate of return was a legitimate cost which should be included in NZ On Air payments to RNZ. The NZ On Air board did not agree but after a short period of 'resistance' relented and in a letter to the Minister of Communications in early 1990 agreed to include a 5% rate of return in its annual funding of \$26,263,862.

These and other difficulties led NZ On Air to ask about 'the propriety of certain charges and the level of some costs' which raised some questions about the structure of Radio New Zealand and led to the accusation that there was 'cross subsidising [of the] commercial operations, thereby giving Radio New Zealand an unfair advantage over their commercial competitors' (NZ On Air 1990).

So it would seem that the relationship between RNZ and NZ On Air got off to a rocky start, NZ On Air stating that 'negotiations [with RNZ were] very sensitive' and required 'discretion' when referring to them (NZ On Air 1990 d).

There were a number of other conflicts at the time all of which added to the uneasiness of the relationship.

National Radio and the Concert Programme were fully state subsidised from the beginning. There was little interest within RNZ to entertain semi-commercial status or programme sponsorship. However sponsorship was actively considered by both NZ On Air and the government in these early years. A Ministerial letter of 23 May 1991 asked to 'what extent (if any) commercial revenue might be partially or wholly available for the provision of specific services'. The Ministry of Commerce welcomed sponsorship in a letter to RNZ's Director General in May 1989 and the NZ On Air Board was 'strongly of the view' that RNZ should pursue sponsorship (NZ On Air, 1989 b,c). Indeed NZ On Air was still considering the possibility of sponsorship as late as October 1993 (NZ On Air 1993). On the other hand the Ernst & Young report argued the contrary suggesting that 'there is no expansion of the pool of advertising money in sight and in fact the reverse is likely'. It concluded that network sponsorship was not practicable.

Further sensitivities were revealed over who would ultimately be responsible for programme content. The Ernst & Young report argued that it would be 'difficult to assess funding for direct expenditure for programmes given the range of categories and any prioritising of those categories' that existed on RNZ's public radio channels. But NZ On Air expressed sufficient interest in influencing programme content for the Chair of RNZ, Richard Rowley, and the chair of NZ On Air to have a 'robust' discussion where Rowley stated his concern that NZ On Air might adopt the attitude that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. He argued that this would be unacceptable to RNZ as he saw it as their right to control content. The chair of NZ On Air responded in a somewhat conciliatory manner that he 'appreciated the points raised, but that the relationship would work best if operated with a degree of flexibility' (NZ On Air 1989e).

The rate of return debate continued throughout 1990 and 1991. NZ On Air showed an increasing impatience with RNZ claiming that its performance in providing information was 'sub-standard' and that the continuing delays in getting information were 'unacceptable'. This culminated in NZ On Air expressing a reluctance to enter a three year funding arrangement with RNZ until 'Government's policy was a little clearer on this issue'. The Chair of RNZ, Richard Rowley, expressed 'anger at the tone of recent correspondence' (NZ On Air 1991).

All of this led NZ On Air to suggest, in a report to the Minister, that the National and Concert programmes should be fully separated from the commercial arm and to recommend the outsourcing of programme production. At one stage NZ On Air considered opening up the whole area of public radio for tender. While suggesting that this might not have found favour with politicians it would have complied with the Broadcasting Act and was seen by the Board as a 'way of galvanising RNZ [as the] continuation of National Radio and the Concert Programme....was vital to their overall operation' (NZ On Air 1990).

It is clear that up to this point at least NZ On Air had a more 'adventurous' view of public radio funding than was the case within the broadcaster itself and perhaps even the government.

A change of government in 1990 and a new Minister saw little immediate change with a directive to 'maintain Radio New Zealand's National Radio and Concert Programme networks in their present form until at least July 1992' (NZ On Air 1989/1990:6) - later extended to December 1992. However, the newly elected National government did appear to have a different agenda for Radio New Zealand and over the next few years the relationship between NZ On Air and RNZ continued to be uneasy at best.

In 1991 NZ On Air commissioned the 'first truly national survey of radio listenership' to measure the RNZ audience. As a consequence NZ On Air required RNZ to measure the quality and quantity of programmes by average hourly audience, time spent listening, and qualitative surveys to measure audience response to programming. 'If the first two indicators dropped by 15% or greater' then financial penalties would be incurred (NZ On Air 1992c).

There was an almost relentless funding pressure. In the first year of NZ On Air's operation it funded RNZ's two networks, its Maori language programme Te Reo o Aotearoa, and the Wellington Maori radio station Te Upoko o Te Ika with a total grant of \$27,925,832 (including a 'transitional' grant of \$2,082,107). In 1991 RNZ was funded for just the two networks at \$26,900,743 (with a 'transitional' grant of \$625,000).

By October 1991 a funding agreement between RNZ and NZ On Air had still not been signed and the network was being supported by month to month payments with NZ On Air 'withholding' 5% each time. Tensions were such that at this time the Minister was led to comment that while the relationship had difficulties NZ On Air should 'continue to negotiate without Ministerial interference' and that the Board 'should not give way on issues that they were not happy with or would be in breach of their responsibilities'.

Richard Rowley, chairman of RNZ, argued that the SOE model 'would not last' and that RNZ would be 'privatised within two years' (NZ On Air 1991b).

By 1991, with funding reduced by four million dollars from its 1989 grant, RNZ felt the need to restructure its operations and obtained a one off grant of \$1.8 million from NZ On Air. The network claimed that in needing to 'behave commercially' it would need to reduce staff in the non-commercial area by 30%. In supporting RNZ restructuring NZ On Air required that there would be no substantial changes to programme output, no reduction in New Zealand drama and music, Maori or special interest programmes, and no reduction in New Zealand music input from Auckland. RNZ was also required to seek technical advice on capital funding for replacement of transmission equipment.

In notes taken from an Oct 1992 three-way meeting between RNZ CEO Nigel Milan, RNZ's recently appointed chairman Brian Kensington, and the Chair of NZ On Air, it was stated that 'since NZ On Air's inception members had felt its funding allocations had been grossly distorted' in that they had to continue allocating a large share of NZ On Air's total income to radio at the expense of television. The Chair of NZ On Air said this was not to say public radio should not continue to be funded through a directive or by an amendment to the Act, but that NZ On Air's primary position was to pay only the minimum cost of public radio. At last in 1992, under the compulsion of a Ministerial Directive, and thus 'under duress' (NZ On Air 1992b), a three year funding package was agreed until June 1995. Thus NZ On Air funding to RNZ was both tightly monitored and persistently reduced from the first grant of \$27.9 million to \$19.4 million in 1994 and the 1995 amount was to be 'fixed and not left open for future discussion' (Williamson 1992). And fixed it was, remaining at \$19.4 million per annum until 1999.

NZ On Air, in its submissions on the Public Radio Charter Bill in 1995, argued that the public broadcaster should not 'automatically take on RNZ's news and current affairs roles' rather it 'should be able to have its news services up for competitive tender'. Further, both National Radio and the Concert Programme should 'be free to purchase news services'.

Finally the network was being 'attacked' by private broadcasters. In an April 1991 meeting with the Independent Broadcasters Association (IBA) the private broadcasters argued that the cost and size of RNZ was excessive in relation to outputs. They also sought NZ On Air funds to support programming on talk-based Radio Pacific and Fine Music, a classical music formatted commercial station (both were rejected). Again, in the same year in June the IBA argued that the Concert Programme could be sustained by commercials and that a combined National/Concert programme on just one channel could be operated at vastly reduced costs – the private broadcasters put a figure of \$6 million on operational costs. Richard Raynor of the IBA argued that major 'restructuring was the very least that was required of RNZ'.

The long path that led to the split of RNZ into two entities, public radio and the on-sold commercial arm, began with the change in government in 1990. Broadcasting Minister Maurice Williamson, in a meeting with the NZ On Air Board in December 1991 'reiterated his desire to see commercial and public radio established as two separate entities' and 'hoped to issue a directive along those lines' as early as July 1992. But it took some time. Keeping the previous government's funding arrangements in place, albeit at reducing amounts through the whole of its first term, suggested the politicians were uncertain. NZ On Air indicated that uncertainty by recording in response to the extension of the Ministerial Directive that the government was dealing with policy issues and still determining what the 'government of the day wishes to fund once [the] directive expires' (NZ On Air 1991c).

NZ On Air called on the Minister to set up a trust to operate RNZ. It appears that initially the Minister also favoured trust control for the broadcaster (NZ On Air 1992d). But there was a change of mind with the government favouring and eventually going with a stand-alone public broadcasting subsidiary of RNZ. In early 1992 the minutes suggested that the

government 'appears to be still in the process of considering the future of RNZ, particularly it seems the ownership of the commercial division' (NZ On Air 1992a). The government initially wanted a three year contract with the new subsidiary, changed its mind and asked for only short term funding, and then reverted to the three year term that was finally implemented. Even the CEO of RNZ Nigel Milan commented at an October 1992 meeting with NZ On Air that he was 'not wedded to public broadcasting being part of the RNZ structure'. He felt that 'public broadcasting had incorrectly been made part of the SOE structure.'

By early 1993 plans for the 'separation' of the non-commercial elements of RNZ into a new, fully owned subsidiary, New Zealand Public Radio, were well advanced and by mid-year NZ On Air's funding contract was with the subsidiary company. However NZ On Air was far from satisfied with this. Issues surrounding engineering services, news services, ownership of transmission sites and asset transfers were still seen as major problems leading to a board paper stating:

The subsidiary structure created by the RNZ plan is predatory. It is designed to enable RNZ Commercial to extract inflated sums of money from, and transfer costs to the broadcasting fee in order to prop up its failing commercial structure. The end result will be that the amount of NZ On Air funding available to the managers of National Radio and Concert FM for programming will be reduced.

NZ On Air 1993a

It suggested that these concerns should be conveyed to the Minister of Communications, a Minister who in that very year placed on record his feelings about public radio. 'Who needs public radio when you have a choice of stations?' (Williamson 1993). Despite these concerns NZ On Air entered into a three year funding agreement through to June 30, 1995.

Issues with RNZ continued and while the tense relationship between NZ On Air and RNZ eased with the establishment of RNZ as a solely public broadcaster in 1995 and the sale of the commercial arm of RNZ in 1996, the following years 'were ones of close and present danger' (Zanker & Pauling 2005:109). NZ On Air reduced funding to the new solely public radio RNZ (\$21.6m in 1993 down to \$19.4m in 1995), the

government was unsympathetic to the concept of public broadcasting with the Prime Minister of the time favouring 'privatisation of public radio' (Zanker & Pauling 2005:109) and a rampant private commercial broadcasting industry provided a continuing hostile environment for the public broadcaster. Programmes were purged, staff reduced by 20% and regional offices dismantled. Indeed it was argued that the only thing that protected RNZ was its 1995 Charter, the founding document which 'was nailed to the door in legislation to justify and protect public radio services' (Crosby, as cited in Zanker and Pauling, 2005:116). A ministerial review in 1998 provided some relief with additional funding but it wasn't until 1999 with the change to a Labour-led government that the public broadcaster was able to feel secure.

But the actions of the new government created fresh concerns for NZ On Air. At the same time as providing increased funds for RNZ, in 1999, 2003 and again in 2005, the government also conducted a review of the RNZ charter. NZ On Air was fearful that the existing funding relationship between NZ On Air could be modified with RNZ receiving some of its new funding directly from government and not through NZ On Air. While that did not immediately happen those fears were increased when in the second term of the Labour-led government a 'Programme of Action' was launched by the Minister of Broadcasting, Steve Maharey, who appeared keen for 'public broadcasting institutions [to take] full responsibility for their funding decisions' (NZ On Air 2005). NZ On Air felt strongly that 'the removal of NZ On Air from the area of National Radio', would weaken the Government's 'general principle' that cultural institutions should be funded at 'arm's length from the political process'. There was clearly a feeling that the Government was considering 'reductions in the scope of NZ On Air's activities' even while acknowledging that 'NZ On Air had been a success'. This did not happen and under Labour the relationship between NZ On Air and RNZ entered a period of relative stability. Gradually increased funding permitted RNZ to complete its transfer to the FM band, open up its programming to online access, improve its staffing levels and grow its audience. In 2010 NZ On Air provided \$31.8 million to RNZ, a substantial improvement to the low of \$19 million a decade earlier. However it should be noted that government funding for RNZ has been frozen since 2009.

COMMUNITY RADIO

New Zealand's unique form of community radio broadcasting is Access Radio. The emphasis is on providing resources and training for community groups and individuals to make their own programmes for broadcast. They are encouraged to conceive, create, produce and present their programmes with any 'outside' help limited to basic radio skills training and access to the technical resources. Minority ethnic programmes tend to dominate the schedules.

The history of access radio programming in New Zealand starts in 1982. Radio New Zealand responded to pressure from Wellington based ethnic groups seeking more minority issues programming and minority language programming on radio by setting up a separate radio service using the parliamentary channel at times when parliament wasn't sitting. A second access station was established in Christchurch at the New Zealand Broadcasting School in 1986 and in 1988 a small commercial RNZ station in the Wairarapa gave three hours of broadcast time every Sunday night over to local community access programming.

So the principles and practices that drive access radio were developed well before the iconic "Section 36c" of the 1989 Broadcasting Act made them mandatory.

Perhaps legislating politicians in the fourth Labour government were closet access radio listeners, because, whether by design, coincidence or synchronicity three things came together at the same time. First, Section 36c of the Broadcasting Act 1989 required NZ On Air to ensure that a range of broadcasts was available to provide for the interests of women, children, minorities, and persons with disabilities. By later amendment, youth and broadcasts that reflect the diverse religious and ethical beliefs of New Zealanders were added.

Secondly, NZ On Air quickly determined that radio was a most effective and efficient medium to deliver these outcomes. At the same time community groups looking to develop a radio presence saw substantial government funding possibilities in helping NZ On Air meet its Section 36c mandate.

Thirdly, in the year that the Act was promulgated a Ministerial Directive was issued requiring NZ On Air to undertake specific funding commitments, including the funding of access radio. The directive said that "... it is part of the general policy of Government in relation to broadcasting ... that access radio services should be available for a broad range of non-profit community groups ..." (Hunt 1989).

Combining the requirements of the Act with the Ministerial Directive, NZ On Air developed a policy of meeting many of its 36c legislative requirements through funding access radio. Since 1989 access radio broadcasters in New Zealand have, understandably, tailored much of their programming to meet Section 36c criteria so as to be eligible for NZ On Air funding. Consequently, community radio in New Zealand rather than being the broadly focused product experienced in other countries is, on the whole, restricted in its functions to the access radio format. However, by doing so community access radio in New Zealand enjoys a level of state funding and support that would be the envy of community radio in most other jurisdictions.

Access radio could be considered a NZ On Air 'success story'. In its first year of operation NZ On Air recognised that access radio 'provides an effective means of meeting our statutory responsibility to ensure that a range of broadcasts is available for minorities in the community, including ethnic minorities' (NZ On Air 1989/1990) and provided funding for the three existing access stations, Wellington, Wairarapa and Christchurch. It also recognised that the decisions of the Labour Government to reserve frequencies for non-commercial community broadcasting in all populations of 10,000 or more would increase the demand for access broadcasting and so it began to develop a policy to meet that demand. In 1990 it also provided funds in response to a Dunedin group to provide an access radio service from early 1991.

Initial funding averaged around \$230,000 per annum for the full time stations and \$24,000 for the restricted part-time Wairarapa Access Radio. Funding was based on a split of costs, sixty per cent being met by NZ On Air and forty per cent being the responsibility of the station.

New access radio stations appeared quite rapidly over the next year or two. Dunedin and Auckland began broadcasting in 1991, followed by Nelson Access Radio, Southland Access and Hamilton Access Radio.

In 1992 there were a number of applications for community radio projects that were outside the more restrictive programming requirements of access radio. A community radio policy was developed which set aside \$100,000 for one-off community radio applications on a 'first in, first served' basis. Priority was to be given to regions with no local community service. Successful applicants were Harvest Radio (Tasman Bays), and Goldfields Radio (Ranfurly); unsuccessful were Gulf FM, Valley FM and Rangi-Atea Community radio (Hamilton).

Eventually these applications caused problems for the limited funds that NZ On Air had set aside for community radio. A more restrictive policy was developed that saw a return to a stricter interpretation of section 36c requirements. The funding for Goldfields Radio and Harvest Radio was discontinued and other applications of a similar nature declined. Strong lobbying by the Harvest Radio people, including contacting ministers of the Crown, resulted in the Minister of Broadcasting suggesting that Harvest Radio and Nelson Access radio combine into one Tasman Bay access radio entity. This was achieved in 1993 with the establishment of the Tasman Bays Broadcasting Society, now broadcasting as Fresh FM.

Radio Kidnappers in the Hawkes Bay joined the access radio group commencing broadcasting in March 1995. Kapiti Coast, after a number of unsuccessful applications, successfully gained funding in 1996 and Manawatu Access Radio in 1997. This brought the number of NZ On Air funded stations to eleven – Auckland, Hamilton, Hawkes Bay, Kapiti Coast, Manawatu, Masterton, Wellington, Tasman Bays, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill. Funding and spectrum limitations kept the number at this level for the following thirteen years. Access Radio Taranaki joined the group in 2010, bringing the number of funded stations to 12.

From the very beginning of access radio funding NZ On Air had a somewhat hands off, almost laissez-faire, approach to the governance of access radio. Stations were responsible for their own governance structures and reporting to NZ On Air was limited to quarterly reports that listed the hours of Section 36c programming broadcast. The determination of just what constituted a Section 36c programme was left to the discretion of the station. In 1997, recognising that the access radio 'funding policy developed in 1989 had remained largely unchanged' and acknowledging that the limitations on the number of access radio stations were due more to 'the result of constraints at NZ On Air's end' rather than 'for want of interest', NZ On Air undertook a 'major review of its access radio policy' (NZ On Air 1997).

The review was 'affirmative but critical in a constructive way'. It suggested that while access radio was performing to a high level in the major population centres (Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) most of the other stations 'needed support to make better radio'. Some stations appeared to be captured by people who wanted to 'play' with radio and offer programmes that were personality driven and centred on music rather than focused on the core of the Section 36c audience. There were examples of stations that were trying to compete in the local commercial radio market place and others that had developed formats more in keeping with wider community radio practices than the more focused access radio structure.

NZ On Air established a consultancy service in 1998 to work with individual stations to implement appropriate programming strategies, 'and shore up strengths and make improvements' (NZ On Air 1998). The service concentrated on governance, management and programming issues and sought to provide resources and knowledge for access stations to more fully carry out their Section 36c mandates.

The outcome of the consultancy was the publication in 2001 of *Radio Diversity - a Handbook for New Zealand Community Radio*. This handbook published both in hardcopy and online has been regularly updated and in 2011 was still used as the foundation document for establishing and operating access radio in New Zealand.

In late 1999 two access stations, coincidentally the largest and smallest, had major crises. In Auckland Access Radio lost their transmission site and in the Wairarapa the Community Access Radio programme was struggling to re-form after the loss of its slot on local commercial radio, the result of the sale of RNZ's commercial stations.

Auckland Access Radio, Planet FM, is the 'flagship' of access radio. It broadcasts section 36c programmes throughout its schedule, often having a queue of potential broadcasters lining up for the rare occasion of a vacant timeslot (one factor contributing to this would be the 1.3 million population of Auckland, four times the size of the next largest city with an access station). Its 24 hour seven days a week schedule is full, broadcasting programmes in a remarkable 46 different languages.

In 1999 changes to the structure of the company that owned the transmitting tower in the Waitakare hills behind Auckland led to the station losing its lease on the tower. Frequencies and transmission sites were both scarce but skilful lobbying by the station led to the acquisition of a position on the much desired Sky City Tower where most of the city's commercial radio stations had their antennae. It also required a switch from an AM signal to FM and the acquisition of a frequency that was much sought after. NZ On Air helped with a major one-off grant contributing to the costs.

In 2008 NZ On Air carried out a review of funding policies for community access radio and regional television. The purpose of the review was to seek opinions on NZ On Air's funding policy for community access radio and regional television.

One of the outcomes of the review was that access radio stations were 'tiered' to reflect their potential audience numbers, differing scales of operation, and potential to deliver a range of programming. Stations were ranked as follows:

1. Tier 1 (Large Metro): Auckland
2. Tier 2 (Large Urban): Christchurch, Wellington, Hamilton
3. Tier 3 (Provincial City): Napier/Hastings, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Nelson, Dunedin, Invercargill
4. Tier 4 (Small Regional): Kapiti, Wairarapa

This recognised the unique nature of the Auckland station with its large audience and diverse and busy programme schedule.

In 2009 a further consultation was undertaken to measure the performance of each access station. The results reflected the relative position each station held in the tier. Programmes broadcast on the station were identified into three groupings:

1. Section 36c programming
2. Other community programming
3. Default programming (usually music fills)

Each tier had the following outcomes in terms of average hours per week:

TABLE 2 ACCESS RADIO OUTCOMES PER WEEK 2009

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Section 36c	119	235	141	73
Other community	1	32	46	20

Source: Review of Community Access Radio, NZ On Air 2010.

This represents an expenditure by NZ On Air of just over \$80 per produced programme hour, arguably an efficient and effective return on its investment.

Following the consultant's report the first priority to come out of the 2010 managers' conference was to increase the amount of section 36c programming broadcast by access radio to both reverse a recent decline and recommit to the requirements to give precedence to Section 36c. A further outcome was to increase station financial self-reliance to return to the funding ratio of 60/40 (60 per cent NZ On Air funding/40 per cent local funding) a convention that prevailed in the early years but was not wholly maintained. Many stations were running on a 70/30 ratio and some had even climbed to 80/20.

By 2010 eight of the twelve access radio stations engaged with digital distribution. Auckland's Planet 104.6 FM distributes its diverse programme on www.planetaudio.org.nz. Seven other stations have combined their resources in the Access Internet Radio (AIR) project. As well as the capability to listen to a live stream of each station an additional 250 programmes are available as podcasts for download by listeners on www.accessradio.org. NZ On Air claims that 'these initiatives extend the range and influence of broadcasting by access radio for a very modest investment' (NZ On Air 2010).

The funding of access radio was steadily if not dramatically increased from 1991. It began at \$1.03 million and rose to \$2.19 million in 2001. The incoming government was sympathetic to access radio and by 2008 nearly \$2.5 million was provided by NZ On Air for access and Pacific Island radio (see below).

In 2011 New Zealand had twelve community access stations, each station a reflection of its community. Population density, range and diversity vary between these stations' communities, from the pastoral backdrop of the rural Wairarapa to the large city 'melting pot' of Auckland's multi-cultural ecology. At an average NZ On Air contribution of between \$60-\$80 an hour (it should be noted that this represents NZ On Air's contribution to the broadcasts, not their actual costs) and with over 6000 hours of dedicated Section 36c programming it must by any calculation be considered value for money. Indeed it could be argued that it is perhaps the most efficient and effective way

of promoting diversity, understanding and community and giving voice to the many cultures that make up Aotearoa/New Zealand.

MAORI RADIO

Indigenous Maori have a tribal (iwi) based culture. The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding constitutional document and it recognises the unique role of Maori as 'first settlers' and their rights in partnership with Pakeha (European in origin) New Zealanders. In 1988 in a response to Maori claims to a share of ownership of the broadcast spectrum, frequencies were made available for the establishment of a network of individual iwi radio stations.

Prior to broadcasting deregulation and the Broadcasting Act 1989 the presence of Maori on New Zealand radio was limited to Aotearoa Maori Radio (AMR), an AM station broadcasting in Auckland (supported by the BCNZ and the Aotearoa Maori Radio Trust), the part-time broadcasting Wellington Maori Language Radio station Te Upoko o te Ika, a 'shoestring' enterprise supported and run by Nga Kaiwhakapumau i te Reo (the Wellington Maori Language Board) and some regular Maori language programming in the Radio New Zealand public radio schedule.

A key responsibility under the Broadcasting Act of 1989 was for NZ On Air 'to reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture by...promoting Maori language and Maori culture'.

Very early on the Board's radio sub-committee began a consultation process that covered a broad range of Maori interests and perspectives to 'develop appropriate systems for assessing and funding Maori broadcasting needs' (NZ On Air 1989e). Included in the consultations were Te Manatu Maori (Ministry of Maori Affairs), Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Maori (Maori Language Commission), Te Kaunihera Maori, Te Tira Iwi (Iwi Transition Authority), Maori Development Corporation and individuals involved in Maori broadcasting. In February 1989 NZ On Air participated in a significant hui of Maori broadcasters and other interested parties to discuss how NZ On Air should carry out its Maori broadcasting functions. This was followed by a series of iwi-based hui held around the country to ascertain Maori wishes for broadcasting.

As a result of this comprehensive consultation NZ On Air's early policies were based on the need to promote te reo Maori and tikanga Maori through radio via a concept of a mix of network radio and community based iwi radio. AMR was 'a given'. It existed prior to NZ On Air which was under a Ministerial Directive to provide funding. But consultation with Maori showed a dominant desire for each iwi to take control of its own broadcasting station.

However, while an initial directive from the Minister of Broadcasting required NZ On Air to devote at least 6% of its income from the Public Broadcasting Fee to Maori broadcasting, the directive stipulated that NZ On Air was to commit \$1.44m of its funds to specifically support Aotearoa Maori Radio to 'maintain a continuous AM radio service in the Auckland area'.

NZ On Air's initial policy for Maori radio in October 1989 was:

- A national networked Maori radio service (AMR)
- Professional Maori radio
- AMR as a linchpin in national Maori radio development, acknowledging the public resources represented by AMR in terms of funding, people and facilities.
- Complementarities and cooperation between AMR, Te Upoko o te Ika, Mana Maori Radio and iwi-based developments
- Efficient and effective use of frequencies reserved by Crown for Maori radio
- A primary commitment to Maori language and culture
- Appropriate consultation
- Acknowledgement of tribal mana
- An ability to generate revenue from sources other than NZ On Air
- Coverage which reaches a population of 10,000 or more

NZ On Air 1989f

The Commission's thinking on Maori radio policy has embraced the concept of network radio and concurrently community Maori/tribal radio. We see network and community radio as complementary and integral components of a national Maori radio plan and we see networking as a key ingredient in the plan.

NZ On Air 1989g

NZ On Air therefore envisioned a series of 'co-ventures involving Aotearoa Maori Radio' and iwi based local radio.

Its proposal was to fund iwi based stations up to a maximum of \$200,000 per annum to cover operating costs. It saw establishment costs such as short term broadcasting to test the 'market' and capital costs as the responsibilities of the community. This, it was argued was to 'establish at the outset the principle of community ownership' (NZ On Air 1990a).

THE DIFFICULTIES

AOTEAROA MAORI RADIO (AMR)

NZ On Air found itself in a dilemma. It did not have sufficient funds to establish AMR nationwide, as promoted by AMR, and at the same time support a range of iwi-based Maori radio stations which, while local, also had the capacity to network themselves. Further, it was receiving strong objection to the notion of a Maori network. At a hui in May 1990 many Maori broadcasters were 'vocal in opposition to the establishment of the AMR network at the expense of local and regional iwi initiatives – but receptive to the Starlink network proposal' (a network of iwi stations to permit shared programming, see p 112) (NZ On Air, 1990b). It appears however that the Minister of Broadcasting, Jonathan Hunt, was 'sympathetic' to AMR's request for \$18 million to fund a four station network (NZ On Air, 1989b). So it was that NZ On Air developed a policy for Maori that went against the dominant Maori broadcaster's wishes and perhaps even that of the government as it listened to grassroots Maori at hui and determined that independent local iwi-based stations should be the priority.

In 1989 NZ On Air supported Aotearoa Maori Radio to the amount specified in the Ministerial Directive. It also provided funding of approximately \$400,000 to enable Te Upoko o te Ika to continue full time broadcast and committed \$650,000 for the establishment of an independent Maori news and information service, Mana Maori Media. It saw this as the basis for 'securing professional programme supply and support' and the foundation of a 'comprehensive national Maori radio development' that had its roots in local iwi radio. In the early 1990 grants were provided to three community Maori radio initiatives – Radio Ngati Porou, Radio Tautoko FM and Te Reo Irirangi o Tainui – to carry out short term test broadcasts and by the end of the year six Maori broadcasters were on air (NZ On Air, 1990c). They were:

- Tautoko Radio (Mangamuka Bridge)
- AMR (Auckland)
- Te Reo Irirangi o Tainui (Ngaruawahia)
- Radio Te Arawa (Rotorua)
- Radio Ngati Porou (Ruatoria)
- Te Upoko o te Ika (Wellington)

However relationships between NZ On Air and AMR were not happy. The Commissioner for the Maori Language formally complained about NZ On Air's funding of AMR on the grounds that it 'has decided not to pursue the language'. NZ On Air itself wished for te reo content of 40%. In contrast an NZ On Air commissioned report (Waru 1990) argued that AMR's 'predominantly English language commercial sound and mixwould need to be maintained because the bulk of Maori population was under 35 and they listen to commercial radio'.

The station said that it would fund expansion out of revenue from advertising and through savings. AMR had visions of being a commercially successful station as well as a Maori one and at one stage believed that it could establish a network out of revenue from advertising. NZ On Air felt that this was both incompatible with Maori radio goals and also impossible to achieve (Impey & Henshall 1990). Further, iwi stations did not support the establishment of an AMR-based national network. Amidst the conflict, in July 1990 the Minister of Broadcasting refused to issue

a directive to fund AMR as a national network but urged NZ On Air to 'continue its efforts to find a mutually agreeable basis for funding AMR's operations' (Hunt 1990).

The conflict continued through 1990 and there was even a brief period when NZ On Air suspended all funding to AMR. By 1991 the new Minister of Broadcasting, Maurice Williamson, became directly involved. He issued a Ministerial Directive that required funding for AMR be reinstated to its full \$1.44 million annually (Williamson 1991). He also directly challenged the need for NZ On Air to require a Maori language quota. He 'did not intend to permit quotas to become part of the government's policy in this area' and said that such matters should be the 'concern of the licence holder'. Sensing support AMR went ahead and opened transmitters in the Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Christchurch, confirming to the Minister that \$1.44 million was 'sufficient to sustain the operation' but this would be the case only if 'either the advertising revenue was substantially increased or overall operating costs were reduced'.

In a defensive letter to the Minister (NZ On Air 1991d) NZ On Air argued that Starlink, the network linking the iwi stations (see below p 112), was a more efficient and effective method of spreading Maori language broadcasting than AMR's network. NZ On Air had 'serious reservations' about AMR's financial performance. The cause of any funding problems on the station 'is not the level of NZ On Air funding, the cause is AMR's decision to extend broadcasts into Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch'. It has failed to 'generate the income that it needs to cover the cost of the network'. NZ On Air argued that other performance measures were acceptable so why not a Maori language performance requirement? Also, to fund AMR to the extent required for the network would 'consume between 60% and 70% of the Commission's fund for Maori radio leaving too little for other important Maori radio initiatives' and there would also be centres where two Maori signals would compete.

The network expansion also caused grief for a South Island applicant for NZ On Air funding. Te Reo o Waitaha applied four times for support to broadcast in Christchurch but was turned down principally on the grounds that the applicants were not tangata whenua and local iwi had first access

to crown frequencies. Te Reo o Waitaha noted that AMR was not iwi-based either yet was permitted to broadcast into Christchurch, and was accordingly upset (NZ On Air 1991a).

In a sense AMR was caught between being an Auckland station or a national network. It was to lose the Auckland youth market to newcomer Mai FM and it failed to gain access to Starlink and the iwi network because it didn't have a strong enough language focus and was not considered an iwi station.

Expenditure on Maori radio in 1991 was 10% of NZ On Air's income (NZ On Air 1991/ 1992:19). The Minister of Broadcasting hoped it would 'level off' in 1992.

TE UPOKO O TE IKA

The Wellington-based Te Upoko o te Ika (head of the fish) is the oldest Maori station. It began with short-term broadcasts with the support of RNZ in the early 80s. Its genesis was an offshoot of Nga Kaiwhakapumau i te Reo (the Wellington Maori Language Board), adopted and supported by Wellington Maori, initially mostly manuhiri (not of the local iwi). It was founded by Maori broadcasting pioneer Piripi Walker. At an early stage it maintained a much stricter language policy than other contemporary broadcasters, insisting that the programme content be 80% Maori language. The Commissioner for the Maori Language who formally complained about NZ On Air funding of Aotearoa Maori Radio on the ground that it 'has decided not to pursue the language' was totally supportive of Te Upoko o te Ika since it had 'chosen to make Maori its main language' (NZ On Air 1989b).

In its first year of operation NZ On Air also provided funding of approximately \$400,000 to enable Te Upoko o te Ika to continue full time broadcast. But Te Upoko o te Ika asked for \$1.25 million in 1989 and made a direct plea to Prime Minister David Lange for support.

Given NZ On Air's stated policy, it was their preference that the station be clearly in iwi control (NZ On Air 1989f). They wanted a separate body to be set up to run Te Upoko o te Ika apart from the Wellington Maori Language Board. While there was some support from within NZ On Air for continuing the current setup, Board member Merimeri Penfold saw the Te Upoko o te Ika model as embracing 'a mixture of tribes [and] working'.

Externally the Ministry of Commerce 'had no difficulty' with NZ On Air treating it differently, but NZ On Air was critical of the amount of money the station required to operate. It was asking for far more than NZ On Air was currently giving other iwi stations and the station had accumulated considerable debt. Indeed the Minister of Broadcasting expressed discomfort with the level of expenditure of Te Upoko o te Ika saying that NZ On Air was treating it as a 'professional resource' for other stations whereas he would prefer monies allocated to iwi who could 'then opt for training methods of their own choice'.

In support of the station it should be noted that staff and members of the Wellington Maori Language Board had spent much time and resources in High Court legal battles over Maori language and the Maori share of broadcasting assets when deregulation occurred. Further, a report commissioned by NZ On Air argued that in Maori radio broadcasting 'Maoriness was best expressed by five stations: Te Upoko was the matapuna, from which Tautoko, Ngati Porou, Kahungunu and Tainui 'drank their fill' (Whaanga 1990).

However NZ On Air was pressing for both a reduction in operating costs and a restructuring of management and in 1991 it began funding the station on a monthly basis in the 'expectation that the major problems existing between NZ On Air and Te Upoko can be resolved during that month (October)'. But in early 1992 the station had 'still not secured the support of all the tangata whenua groups because of concerns regarding existing management and the broader aspirations of what iwi groups wished for (NZ On Air 1992). As late as July 1993 continuing problems of funding and governance were of concern (NZ On Air 1993b). Eventually three local iwi combined to establish a trust and the station began operating under a structure that conformed with NZ On Air Maori radio policy with a business plan and cash flow programme agreed to and endorsed by all three tangata whenua licence holders. However, in late 1993 the Atiawa iwi left the trust to establish a separate station in Lower Hutt, Atiawa FM.

MAI FM

Auckland iwi, Ngati Whatua, the most significantly urban of Maori iwi, launched Mai FM in July 1992 with funds from NZ On Air. Mai is the Maori word for welcome and has no tribal affiliation. The iwi initially approached NZ On Air for a grant of \$3.6 million but this was declined and the 'standard' annual iwi radio rate of \$200,000 plus a one-off capital grant was offered and accepted. In June the Ngati Whatua Trust Board, the station licence holder, secured agreement from the station's management for 40% Maori language content on Mai FM. But this did not eventuate. By August 1992 concerns were being expressed by both the Ministry of Commerce and NZ On Air that Mai FM was not meeting its obligations under the Broadcasting Act in terms of both Maori language content and Maori culture.

Further concerns were expressed by private commercial broadcasters who saw the new station as competing in the commercial market place on a frequency that had been clearly offered for non-commercial language and cultural purposes. Initially Mai FM fought back with an upfront publicity campaign arguing that it was meeting the needs of young Maori. The station was drawing a considerable audience of young people across all cultures with a music format of urban dance that clearly had appeal for young people.

Mai FM's behaviour was outside the guidelines for iwi radio funding and NZ On Air took a hard line. It obtained government support and gave 30 days for Mai FM to improve Maori language and culture content. A slightly dissenting voice was that of Board member Jim Stevenson who suggested that while 'Mai FM [was] driven by revenue targets' NZ On Air needed to be 'realistic about special urban circumstances' that were different from those which usually applied to Maori stations. NZ On Air refers to the 'government taking a very hard line' in that Mai FM's license would be revoked within 30 days if there was no improvement in the content of Maori language and culture. There was also some 'political pressure' from private radio who argued that 'both government and NZ On Air funding were encroaching on commercial revenues' (NZ On Air 1992e).

That 'hard line' from government was radically modified within a few months. The 'Stevenson approach' seemed to gain traction within government. At a meeting with the Minister (NZ On Air 1992f) it was noted that the Minister had a 'change in attitude to being supportive of Mai FM' and suggested the 'vision may need to be broadened' to include its funding. He then issued a Ministerial Directive to NZ On Air to not only fund Mai FM but to double its funding for one year, 1993. However, the directive also put a limit on the funding by saying that NZ On Air could stop providing money for Mai FM after 1994, which it did.

THE SUCCESSES

LOCAL IWI RADIO

By 1993, 22 local iwi stations were set up throughout New Zealand. 21 of these stations were based in the North Island (a reflection of Maori settlement patterns) and one in the South Island. Each was managed by and broadcast to local iwi. For NZ On Air it was quite a remarkable achievement to go from one full time station (AMR) and one intermittent station (Te Upoko o te ika) to this number in less than four years of operation.

While all iwi stations were initially established with funding from NZ On Air continuing Maori pressure for further control over their broadcasting resources led to the establishment in 1995 of Te Mangai Paho (TMP), a funding agency for Maori broadcasting. There was a short 'hand-over' period but by 1996 TMP was managing the funding of all iwi stations and ancillary Maori radio services. At the time of handover to TMP at the end of 1994 the only station that managed to maximise its audience was Mai FM and it did so not with te reo Maori but with an urban dance music format that appealed to young Maori.

As of 2011 each station received \$320,000 funding per year for basic operational costs. In 2006 TMP made it mandatory for iwi stations to transmit a minimum of eight hours Maori language programming daily between the hours of 6am and midnight to receive funding (TMP 2011).

While the public funding is adequate for the basic functioning of each station, it is modest in comparison with most commercial radio stations. Generally salaries are low and many of the stations are reliant on volunteer support and young and unskilled employees. There is an acknowledged shortage of experienced broadcasters who are fluent in te reo Maori and those with both skill sets are most often enticed into the commercial radio industry.

All iwi stations now stream their signals over the Web and are also connected on a high speed wide area network called Punga.net, a digital network that replaced Starlink and which enables new broadcast technologies and distribution options. Stations can share individual programmes with the network and participate in collaborative live broadcasts. Podcasting (RSS) capabilities allow stations to publish audio for the public to access.

The interests of the iwi radio stations are looked after by Te Whakaruruhau o Nga Reo Irirangi Maori o Aotearoa, a Maori radio industry group made up of representation of all the iwi radio stations (Irirangi 2011).

MANA MAORI MEDIA

Mana Maori Media was quickly established in 1989 (co-founded by Maori broadcaster Derek Fox and journalist Gary Wilson) to provide news, current affairs and other programming to the fledging iwi stations. Its initial funding of \$650,000 for establishment was followed by payments approaching \$1 million each year until the handover to Te Mangai Paho. NZ On Air considered Mana Maori Media such an important element in the Maori broadcasting equation that early on it considered taking a 10% shareholding (NZ On Air 1989h). This was not followed through. Also, NZ On Air suggested a trust to operate both the Starlink network and Mana Maori Media. This also did not eventuate and a company structure was put in place.

Using the Starlink network, by 1993 18 stations and three Mana Maori Media outlets (Wellington, Auckland, Rotorua) were linked together and also to RNZ's master control room. This provided a service that could match the reach and immediacy of any other public or commercial radio news provider.

One of the values of Mana Maori Media was that it had programming and production skills and resources. Independent productions for Maori radio were difficult because of 'a distinct lack of Maori radio programme producers capable of producing quality Maori language and Maori audience targeted programmes'. Mana Maori Media provided their studio resources for a nominal fee for independent Maori radio production and provided financial assistance to independent producers.

It is ironic that the first Maori radio station on air, AMR, waited until 1992 before taking the Mana Maori Media feeds. Given its networking ambitions perhaps it saw Mana Maori Media as competition.

STARLINK

At the May 1990 hui where Maori broadcasters were vocal in opposition to the establishment of the Aotearoa network at the expense of local and regional iwi initiatives, they proved very receptive to the Starlink network proposal, a network to link stations together to share each other's programmes and take national feeds. As a consequence this project became a 'cornerstone' of NZ On Air Maori radio policy. It commissioned Telecom New Zealand to provide a two-way high quality audio link to stations and Mana Maori Media to provide the service. As an example of its usefulness in July 1991 Mana Maori Media produced a 3 hour package on the Maori Sports Award Dinner. This was taken by most iwi stations via Starlink.

Mana Maori Media went on to produce a programme based on the National Maori Festival of the Arts and thus the usefulness of Starlink was proved. However it was expensive at \$500,000 per year and there were suggestions Starlink was under-utilised with Mana News bulletins being the main use and just a few stations (Tainui, Tumeke, Turangi and sometimes Paeroa) providing other stations with mid-dawn shows, and Te Upoko o te Ika and Ngati Porou providing some daytime programmes.

In its 1993 report NZ On Air claimed that the 'major challenge facing Maori radio [was] the need to balance the cultural objectives of promoting te reo Maori with the need to supplement the funding base'. However it pointed out that the ultimate success of a Maori radio station, measured in terms of the Broadcasting Act, was the ability to both broadcast in te reo Maori and maximise the audience.

Overall, and given the short period of time that NZ On Air held responsibility for Maori radio, its policies in this area should be considered a success. In just four years, the number of Maori radio stations multiplied from two to twenty-two, Mana Maori Media was established as a reliable nationwide provider of news and national programming, a comprehensive linking network, Starlink, was developed and the commitment to te reo Maori as the preferred language for broadcast won the approval of a diverse range of Maori from the Maori Language Commission to iwi authorities and prominent Maori broadcasters.

PACIFIC RADIO

The birth and growth of Pacific Island radio broadcasting in New Zealand can best be described as a journey fraught with opportunities, challenges, bitter setbacks, obstacles and unrelenting pressure.

Alo 2005:89

The opportunities occurred early on in the life of NZ On Air. In October 1991 the Minister of Broadcasting expressed support for the establishment of a Pacific Island radio station in Auckland provided it was funded in the same manner as current access radio stations but suggested that outside of Auckland all 'Pacific Island ventures' were expected to be part of existing or new community access radio stations.

The first independent Pacific Island radio broadcasts did occur on a local community access station in Wellington. Early approaches to NZ On Air were made by two competing Wellington Samoan community groups, the Samoan Broadcasting Service and Samoan Capital Radio 91. NZ On Air was reluctant to determine which group should receive funding and asked that the community work together to make a single application. With the assistance of the Wellington Samoan Advisory Council in June 1992, Samoa Capital Radio was established as New Zealand's first Samoan language radio station. It has grown to occupy a considerable portion of the access frequency's airtime, offering 38 hours each week of programming mainly in the Samoan language covering a mix of general information and discussion, sport, Samoan culture, religious programmes and Samoan music.

In Auckland an AM frequency had been set aside for Pacific Island radio by the Ministry of Commerce and as early as 1990 NZ On Air received an application from Radio Manukau to fund a Pacific Island radio station. This was not supported at the time but by October 1991 NZ On Air was able to declare a willingness to support a Pacific Island station in Auckland funded along the same lines as existing access radio stations i.e. no more than \$200,000 per annum and no support for capital equipment purchases.

In 1992 a Pacific Island Radio Steering Committee was formed under the wing of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and NZ On Air gave \$15,000 to provide for a short term broadcast in August. The trial was a success and in August 1993 Radio 531pi went to air in Auckland with the purpose of supporting the languages, music and culture of Pacific communities (Alo 2005). Since that time Radio 531pi has been broadcasting continuously with programmes in English and nine Pacific languages.

One of the early challenges for the fledgling 531pi was financial. It found it difficult to work within the funding constraints despite being granted \$275,000 in 1994 and a further \$238,000 in 1995, considerably more than any other community station was getting at the time. It also overestimated sources of revenue outside NZ On Air. The station went into deficit and there was some tension as NZ On Air moved to require the station to improve its financial performance.

From that time until 2000 the NZ On Air funding arrangements for Pacific Island radio remained static. The annual grant to 531pi dropped to \$125,000 somewhat less than that provided for Samoan Capital Radio at \$150,000 and remained at that level for five years. However, during that time 531pi was able to meet a further challenge by increasing its revenue from other sources, particularly advertising, to the extent that by 2002 it was generating \$1 million advertising revenue each year (Misa 2003).

The Labour-led government elected in 1999 increased funding for Pacific Island radio in 2000 (both 531pi and Samoan Capital Radio received \$200,000) and also followed through on its election manifesto promise to establish a national radio network for Pacific peoples in New Zealand. In 2002 \$7.7 million was granted to establish a pilot Pacific Island nationwide FM network.

NZ On Air had no direct relationship with this venture - the two agencies working together to monitor and evaluate the four year pilot were the Ministries of Pacific Island Affairs and Culture and Heritage.

However the establishment of Niu FM, the Pacific Island radio network, provided both setbacks and obstacles with substantial friction developing between the interested parties. There were disputes between Niu FM and 531pi with the latter writing directly to the Prime Minister about the unsustainability of two Pacific Island stations competing in the Auckland market for advertisers and audiences.

The issues ended up in expensive court proceedings and while NZ On Air was not directly involved, as the direct funder of 531pi it had interests. The Auckland Pacific Island Community Radio Trust (APICRT) was the governing body of 531pi and had been running the station for 10 years. The National Pacific Radio Trust (NPRT) was a government appointed agency set up to establish Niu FM. In 2002 APICRT was successful in bidding for the contract to operate Niu FM. 'As the only contender with a track-record in pan-Pacific broadcasting, and the only community-owned outfit, 531pi had seemed like the obvious and only choice' (Misa 2003:3). Radio 531pi set up a new company, Pasefika Communications Network Ltd, to operate the Niu FM network and the NPRT was tasked with funding and governance. But in mid 2003 Pasefika was dismissed by NPRT among accusations of poor performance, bad behaviour and mispending of funds.

The Minister of Broadcasting called a meeting in early 2004 with all interested parties, (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Niu FM, Radio 531pi and NZ On Air) and put pressure on all of them to resolve the problems. At this time NZ On Air expressed a preference for trusts to be established for both stations, acting as governors rather than funders and with both stations continuing as independent broadcasters, 531pi focusing on the Auckland market and a more mature audience while Niu FM targeted the younger Pacific Island demograph nationwide. On top of the strife with Niu FM, relationships with NZ On Air became strained in 2004 over 531pi's response to an NZ On Air audit.

Under the leadership of consultant Chris Prowse, NZ On Air facilitated a resolution to the problem with the two stations working together. The outcome was the establishment of the Pacific Media Network (PMN) a parent entity to both Pacific radio stations, reporting to the NPRT. Niu FM connects Pacific peoples throughout New Zealand using 13 frequencies on its nationwide network; 531pi broadcasts to its traditional Auckland audience. In 2010 Radio 531pi and Niu FM celebrated '25 years' of Pacific Island broadcasting in New Zealand, 17 years of broadcasting for Radio 531pi and 8 years for NiuFM.

NZ On Air continues to support 531pi and in 2011, for the first time, it became the conduit for Niu FM funding. In 2011-12 NZ On Air plans to provide \$3.6m per annum to NPRT to operate both 531pi and Niu FM radio services for Pacific peoples in New Zealand. This funding continues to be supplemented by commercial revenue.

COMMERCIAL RADIO PROGRAMME FUNDING

There appeared to be an initial reluctance to fund radio programmes on other than RNZ non-commercial, Maori radio and access. This was seen in the rejection of funding for Radio Rhema in 1990, the rejection in 1992 of applications for *Reflecting On* (Christian Broadcasters Association) and *Kiwi Creative* (Radio Pacific). But the thinking changed.

But that was us saying well, Section 37D says radio drama. We could just say we will leave it to RNZ and wash our hands of it but why don't we have a go getting them happening on commercial radio.

Smyth 2011

And they did. While most of NZ On Air's resources directed towards commercial radio were New Zealand music focused (see chapter 14), a number of small dramas, radio serials and comedy programmes were funded on commercial radio from 1994. The first programme to receive NZ On Air support, *The New Zealand Chronicles*, was broadcast over the Radio Pacific network. In the same year a children's series *The Quest* was heard on the RNZ commercial network and *The Rampage Radio Show*, a teenage focused lifestyle magazine programme, was also

broadcast. Unlike other NZ On Air radio funding which was aimed at directly supporting broadcast institutions, this funding stream was more akin to NZ On Air's television funding policies. The programmes were made by independent producers and placed with commercial radio networks willing to broadcast them.

The following year a comedy sketch series *The Caffeine Comedy Hour* and a radio serial *Steveman* were independently produced and syndicated on 37 radio stations. The success of this funding intervention was demonstrated when *The Caffeine Comedy Hour* won the award for Best Daily or Weekly Series at the annual New Zealand Radio Awards in 1994 and the comedy series *Starship Cortina* won the same award a year later.

In 1995 NZ On Air placed priority on producing independent radio programming in the fields of drama, comedy and children's programmes given 'the interests of these...in the Broadcasting Act' but added that while successful there was limited funding for this particular field of radio production (NZ On Air 1994/1995).

In 1997 NZ On Air commissioned six independent projects for commercial radio including *Claybourne*, a mix of sci-fi, supernatural thriller, soap opera and radio drama. It too was successful in competition, judged "Best Dramatic Production of the Year" in the 1999 New Zealand Radio Awards.

By 1998 NZ On Air's budget for commercial radio programmes reached just under \$1 million. But in that year they announced a dramatic cut in support of independent radio programmes to just one programme, the youth programme *Rampage* (which also won a radio award in 1999) because it was instructed by the government 'to find extra funding for National Radio and the Concert Programme in the coming year' (NZ On Air 1998a). NZ On Air's position was:

NZ On Air remains keen on the idea of infiltrating commercial radio with drama, comedy and youth radio shows, seeding this kind of programming which is close to NZ On Air's statutory heart and delivering to the substantial audiences that use commercial radio services. The loss...was a major disappointment... but until NZ On Air's funding improves the prospects for resuming this work remain bleak.

NZ On Air 1998/1999

The annual report for 1998/1999 had no listing for funds spent on commercial radio programming.

The change of government in 1999 and a consequent increase in NZ On Air funding saw a 'modest' reinvestment in commercial radio programming (NZ On Air 1999/2000). Perhaps in a reflection of the additions to Section 36c of the Broadcasting Act two programmes that benefitted were made by the Christian Broadcasters Association, the series *Scrubcutter* and the annual Christmas and Easter *Specials* broadcast on NewsTalk ZB.

NZ On Air was keen to return to the more generous funding of commercial radio programmes that existed prior to the 1998 cutbacks and provided new funding to develop such programmes. From 2002 they slowly returned to the airwaves on a variety of commercial outlets as NZ On Air reconfirmed its commitments to programmes of 'spiritual and ethical value...the interests of youth...[and] locally produced drama and comedy' (NZ On Air 2003/2004). Over the years funding increased from the low point of 1999 to again reach the \$1 million mark in 2010.

CONCLUSION

As of 2011 the New Zealand radio broadcasting environment can be summarised as existing in four distinct categories.

1. Group one is the numerically large (by world standards) and economically successful (its 11% of the total advertising spend being the highest of any jurisdiction) commercial radio sector, dominated by two large media conglomerates, both overseas owned, and claiming up to 80% of the radio audience (TRB 2011).
2. Group two is a smaller sector of independent broadcasters, both networked and single stations made up of 'single issue' broadcasters. This sector is almost entirely focused on the Christian religious audience and ethnic language audience, the latter catering to the large and recent immigrant communities from Asia.

3. Group three consists of all of the radio stations that gain some support from the state. Many within this group would not be on air without government funding. All of these broadcasters have a close relationship with NZ on Air or the Maori equivalent Te Mangai Paho. The sector includes the large state non-commercial public broadcaster Radio New Zealand, a dozen community access radio stations, Pacific-focused networks and stations, campus-based student radio, and a broadcaster that provides audio reading services for the sight-impaired.
4. Group four, colloquially known as the 'wild west of radio broadcasting' (Simpson 2011) consists of a large number of informal radio stations operating in what is commonly called the 'Guard Band'. This is a small area of the radio spectrum set aside to protect the 'bleeding' of one use of the spectrum with another (e.g. radio broadcasting and taxis or civil aviation). Anyone can quickly get a General Users Radio Licence (GURL) so long as they meet technical regulations. Stations tend to come and go and many are on air for a short time and a specific purpose. Hundreds of such stations have been created, one source suggests over 1,500 (Radio Heritage 2011). It is estimated that there could be up to 200 such services operating at any one time (Simpson 2011).

It is one of the most diverse radio ecologies in the world and NZ On Air's contribution to the development of this is substantial. It is because of NZ On Air that group three of the matrix exists. NZ On Air has presided over the development of a very effective and efficient public radio broadcasting system based on a clear set of objectives as set out in Section 36 of the Broadcasting Act. The continued funding of Radio New Zealand, even although a point of tension from time to time, the development of Maori radio, the support for community access radio, Pacific radio, Radio for the Print Disabled and the earlier funding of remote transmission sites (see Chapter 15) are evidence that radio has been one of NZ On Air's most successful portfolios. It is doubtful that there is anywhere else in the world where such a diverse public radio system has been developed and maintained using the small level of funding that has been available in this country.

CHAPTER 13

BROADCAST ARCHIVING

I think the problem with archiving for NZ On Air is that in a sense it is not exactly their first priority. In fact, NZ On Air is inclined to be so production oriented that it has to remind members of the Board from time to time that archiving is something they also have to do.

Horrocks 2011

INTRODUCTION

New Zealand on Air's engagement with broadcasting archives began reluctantly, developed spasmodically and appears to be in the process of ending by acknowledging that archiving should not be core business. It doesn't sit comfortably with a production-focused organisation in a sector that already suffers from fragmentation.

This chapter shows that the key issues that began NZ On Air's relationship with archives are still the key issues as the relationship ends. In summary they are:

- A lack of understanding within the broadcasting community of the true nature of archiving
- The need to deal with multiple archiving agencies
- A risk of duplication and the converse risk of missed programmes, a consequence of the involvement of multiple agencies
- The enormous growth in broadcasting sources, a consequence of deregulation, competition and technology
- The challenges the rise of digital technologies pose to both the archiving functions themselves as well as archive sources (not just broadcast frequencies but online sources)
- The perennial problem of lack of sufficient funds to do the job adequately.
- The difference between an archive and a production library (see below p 120)

While the Broadcasting Act of 1989 required NZ On Air to 'encourage the establishment and operation of archives of programmes that are likely to be of historical interest in New Zealand' it is fair to say that the new Broadcasting Commission was at first reluctant to be directly involved. Initially it claimed that archiving was 'not a priority for NZ On Air'. It saw the cost of archiving as potentially high and stated that there had been a 'failure in the past to adequately provide for archiving' (NZ On Air 1991).

There was also an early expectation that other organisations would 'contribute significant funding for broadcasting archives....which should reduce the need for Commission funding for archives' (NZ On Air 1989). However this was not to be.

BACKGROUND

Because broadcasting began, and remained for many years, an agency of government there was little need for the establishment of an 'independent' archive. In terms of radio, the New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS) established in 1938 in Wellington what it called a 'Special Library'. It remained as such until 1956 when the NZBS formally established its Sound Archive (SA) and shifted all of its Special Library into SA and relocated it to Timaru. Responsibility for the SA remained with the NZBS through the transition to the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC), Radio New Zealand, the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand and, latterly, Radio New Zealand again (RNZ).

The establishment in 1962 of the Maori Section of the NZBC saw a separate Maori programme archive, Nga Taonga Korero (NTK), established in Auckland. Enthusiastic leadership saw the unit record many hundreds of hours as staff

travelled from marae to marae, from hui to hui - marae openings, the Coronation hui, Hui Toopu, Hui Aranga, cultural festivals both regional and national, nga tangihanga, welcomes and farewells, Waitangi, royal occasions, and Maori cultural clubs were all grist to their microphones

Sound Archives 2011

It was said that all this material was recorded for broadcast purposes, although it is unclear how much actually went to air.

Prior to 1985 the Maori collection was held in Papatoetoe but that year because of lack of space it was moved into central Auckland and became part of the RNZ Maori programme unit Te Reo o Aotearoa. The unit morphed into Aotearoa Maori Radio (AMR) in 1989 but with the demise of AMR the collection again became the responsibility of RNZ in 1995.

In 1992 a similar lack of space for expansion and problems with the Timaru location of SA led to it being transferred to Christchurch, where it remains today. In 1995 the management and administration of NTK shifted to the SA. It remains under the control of Radio New Zealand as a fully owned subsidiary company, Sound Archives/Nga Taonga Korero (SA/NTK).

Television was also exclusively a state enterprise from its inception in 1961 until private television arrived in 1989. Thus under its various guises (NZBS, NZBC, TV One and TV2, BCNZ and finally TVNZ) it also took responsibility for its own archiving. It moved home on a number of occasions before having its own purpose built facility established in Avalon in 2001. It claims that its archive is 'New Zealand's largest audiovisual production library'. It also houses the New Zealand National Film Unit collection and holds 'the largest collection in the world of moving images recording the culture and heritage of Maori' (TVNZ 2011).

EARLY YEARS

NZ On Air's initial interpretation of its responsibilities was summed up by NZ On Air board member Jim Stevenson's comments at a meeting with the then Chief Archivist, Chris Blake, when he said that he saw 'the original intention of NZ On Air having archiving responsibilities was as an encouragement rather than a major responsibility' (NZ On Air 1992). As early as 1992 NZ On Air was seeking other organisations to take care of archives stating that it did not 'necessarily consider [NZ On Air] should shoulder the full cost of and responsibility for this activity' (NZ On Air 1992). Horrocks stated (2010) that 'we had so much on our plate in terms of battles over production that it took quite a long time to even get around to thinking about it'.

Prior to the establishment of NZ On Air the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) under the 1976 Broadcasting Act had the power to 'establish and maintain a library or libraries of such radio, television and other materials as the Corporation thinks necessary'. In 1988 the Government announced that unless the newly established broadcasting SOEs (TVNZ and RNZ) wished to assume full financial and operational responsibilities for their archives then all material prior to 1987 would be transferred to the National Archives.

Both TVNZ and RNZ indicated a wish to retain full responsibility for their respective archival material. Given that both SOEs were charged with operating commercially, their decision probably reflected the fact that they saw the archives more as a production library and a commercially valuable resource than as an archive in the accepted sense. Indeed TVNZ was criticised by both the National Archive and the NZ Film Archive arguing that 'the procedures for preserving material do not meet appropriate standards with the result that much archival material remaining is of poor quality' (NZ On Air 1989/1990).

One example was the film of the sinking of the Wahine much of which had been cut, edited, spliced and reused over the years to such an extent that the condition of the remaining original material was far from the quality an archivist would expect from properly curated footage. It was suggested that significant programmes had been lost or cannibalised for other productions and that the fees that the broadcaster charged for access were set at commercial levels thereby reducing access by individuals and researchers. Such criticisms were more muted with RNZ, the radio broadcaster generally garnering 'greater respect' (Horrocks 2011) for the integrity of its archival operation.

This 'reluctance' to engage with archiving was understandable given that NZ On Air, from its very beginning was production orientated, with more pressing policy issues facing a small agency. Early on it recognised the need to 'secure suitable archiving for programmes funded by the Broadcasting Fee' and accepted the 'urgent' need for a standardised approach to television archiving given the 'proliferation of television broadcasters' (NZ On Air 1989).

However, from its establishment until the commissioning of the Barr Report in 1996, funding for archiving was somewhat ad hoc and tended towards maintaining the status quo. NZ On Air accepted responsibility for funding most of TVNZ's archive activities and in 1989 funded the archive with \$421,888. This included the preservation of the existing archive collection and the acquisition of new TVNZ programming. Independent and TV3-produced programming received support from a temporary NZ On Air scheme which provided archive funding to producers for NZ On Air-funded programming (NZ On Air 1989/1990).

NZ On Air also supported RNZ's archives. In 1989 funds of \$301,916 were given to Radio New Zealand. The following year, the amount provided to RNZ jumped to \$718,750 to assist with the relocation of SA to Christchurch, provide for updated equipment (digital audio tape technology) in the new premises and to 'secure Radio New Zealand's priceless Maori collection – Nga Taonga Korero' housed within RNZ's Maori language facility in Auckland (NZ On Air 1990/1991).

During the period up to 1994 NZ On Air appeared to be more concerned about television archives than radio. This was perhaps a reflection of the fear that TVNZ was becoming less a public broadcaster and more a commercial one while RNZ maintained much of its public broadcasting status. Another concern was the confusion between archiving and production library activities in both television and radio, NZ On Air believing that only archives should attract public funding.

In 1991 NZ On Air established an industry working party to review all aspects of television archiving. Members of the group included TVNZ, TV3, the Independent Producers' and Directors' Guild, the New Zealand Film Archive and the National Archive.

This group reported back in early 1992 and from the report NZ On Air developed a set of guidelines that determined how television programmes of historical interest to New Zealand would be selected and archived. Two agencies would be supported, the TVNZ Archive and the New Zealand Film Archive. Archiving would not be restricted to just NZ On Air funded programmes but all programmes that were of historical interest to New Zealanders.

The appearance of The New Zealand Film Archive (NZFA) in the picture at this time is significant. The Archive was established in 1981 as a charitable trust, an initiative of the emerging NZ film industry. The founder and first director of the Archive was Jonathan Dennis who was a leading critic of TVNZ's archives policies. NZFA was an active lobbyist on behalf of the film community and the independent producers and one that NZ On Air took notice of (Prowse 2011). It would appear that board member Roger Horrocks was also supportive of the film archive having a role in television. He expressed concern that TVNZ's Archive was receiving the bulk of the money' but argued that NZFA needed to 'establish itself gradually step by step'....and suggested initial funding to 'establish the acquisitions side' (NZ On Air 1992a).

As a direct response to the industry working party report, in 1992 NZ On Air provided \$84,000 to the NZFA to 'investigate the quantity of programming by independent producers requiring archiving and to contribute towards the cost of acquiring television film and video material from Pacific Films Ltd' (NZ On Air 1991/1992). This began the long and increasingly complex relationship between NZ On Air and NZFA that ended in 2010.

In 1993 NZ On Air continued to fund the TVNZ Archive (\$460,322) and funded the NZ Film Archive (\$138,575) specifically to archive independently produced television programmes pre-1983 and not already in the TVNZ archive and to seek out and archive all pre-1990 television commercials.

Understandably perhaps, there developed some confusion between agencies as to the number of local productions that might warrant archiving. For example in 1993 the TVNZ Archive reported that it archived 775 hours of independent television production, all transmitted in 1992. In the same period NZ On Air reported funding 521 hours of independent production. And addressing the same issues the NZFA, in the same year, reported a 'backlog' of just 300 items and an 'ongoing acquisition requirement' of 120 items. At the Board meeting of June 1993 a 'stocktake' of television archiving was called for.

That 'stocktake' resulted in a further draft policy and funding statement from NZ On Air being released for discussion with the industry in 1994. It highlighted a number of difficulties with the existing method of funding, particularly duplication or overlap between collections, drawing a clear distinction between production libraries and archives, and the need for NZ On Air to decide on specifications for its funding to enable it to deal with the increase in potential archive material with the limited funds available. The statement was so bold as to suggest that NZ On Air should limit its archive funding to a fixed amount per programme hour and to NZ On Air-funded programmes only. The funding would be paid to the producer who would then select an archive for the programme.

This did not meet with universal approval. It was challenged by the Ministry of Commerce, NZ On Air's monitoring Ministry at that time, and by TVNZ. For example TVNZ argued that archiving the 6.00pm news was probably 'more important' than archiving *Shortland Street* (NZ On Air 1994). Two major concerns were articulated. First, there was a strong risk that if archive funding was limited to NZ On Air-funded programming only then other programmes of cultural and historical interest to New Zealand would be neglected. The second issue surrounded matters of funding for ongoing preservation reinforcing the view that collection was the first priority of broadcasting archives not protection.

NZ On Air reacted to these criticisms by arguing that up until the creation of NZ On Air the major broadcasting organisations in both television and radio determined their own archiving policies and procedures and focused on their own needs. As a consequence of this there were no established national policies around the long term preservation and custody of existing collections.

NZ On Air also considered there were issues both of duplication, where more than one organisation archived the same programme, and gaps where a programme failed to be archived by any organisation. It felt there was a need to address expanding services for it perceived there was no consideration of new television broadcasters (regional, cable, UHF providers) and in radio the archive was almost exclusively dominated by RNZ material to the exclusion of an increasing range of private broadcasters and the new access and Maori radio stations. NZ On Air felt that more cost

effective ways could be developed to acquire television programmes for archive and it was aware that its funding processes did not provide for any form of contestability or tendering for archive services.

THE BARR REPORT

To assess these concerns, in 1995 NZ On Air contracted Jim Barr and Mary Barr Limited to review the existing broadcasting archiving services. In the meantime NZ On Air continued to fund TVNZ to archive its own programmes and significant local programming from TV3. They also continued to provide a small amount of funding to the NZFA to archive a range of historic television material made by independent producers and not previously archived.

The Barr Report focused on a number of factors that were likely to impact on the continuing funding of broadcast archiving. Most had already been identified by NZ On Air including funding constraints, the continuing growth in the number of broadcasting services, digital technology challenges and the fact that no public archive existed in New Zealand to ensure long-term protection for broadcast material in the public interest.

Most significantly, they noted that 'a number of organisations (read TVNZ and RNZ) have taken on broadcast archival functions (supported by NZ On Air funding) alongside their production library functions. With such a combination there can be conflicts over ownership, access for the general public, and scope' (Barr 1996).

The report was most critical of the 'production library' nature of existing broadcast archiving. The Barrs went to some effort to highlight the true 'nature' of an archive.

The characteristics of a production library were:

- Driven by production demands
- Attempts to be commercial
- Involved in contemporary use
- Restricted and mediated access usually on the grounds of efficiency
- Material owned by the library
- Associated with broadcasters

Whereas the characteristics of an archive were:

- Driven by preservation
- Not commercial (but some user-pays)
- Dedicated to long-term preservation
- Open access to collections
- Material owned on behalf of the public.
- Independent from the broadcasters

This was a direct criticism. The view of the report was that TVNZ's Archive and RNZ's Sound Archive were primarily production libraries.

The report made one long term recommendation and a number of short term recommendations. The long term recommendation was:

For NZ On Air to support the establishment of a National Broadcast Archive. The National Broadcast Archive would be responsible for archiving broadcasts of historical interest for future New Zealanders. Currently the archiving of broadcasting has no linkage to a national archive policy. There are numerous organisations and funders involved in the process. A National Broadcast Archive associated with the National Archives would provide the necessary linkage.

Barr 1996

The short term recommendations were:

That NZ On Air funding should be provided for:

- Collection (deposit, off-air recording, tape exchange programmes, registration and description)
- Preservation (storage, maintenance, corrective treatment and technology transfer)
- Access for use (dubbing of viewing copies, public access to programmes and guidelines for rebroadcast).

The report recommended that these core archiving activities could be let out for tender. NZ On Air would specify the terms of tenders (for example, for television and radio, NZ On Air could set a specified number of broadcast hours to be archived each year) and ensure that the standards set were in accord with its statutory objectives.

The report also suggested that the principal method of programme collection should be by off-air recording. It argued that this would enable a greater range of broadcast programmes to be collected in a relatively easy manner.

Another significant recommendation concerned the ownership of the archived programmes. The report stated that all recordings for archival purposes and funded by NZ On Air should be held on trust by the archive on behalf of the New Zealand public and that if a situation ever arose where the archive was not in a position to continue this role then the material would transfer to the National Archives.

And reinforcing the criticism of the existing archives the report stated finally that all programmes collected for NZ On Air's archival requirements

must be arranged and catalogued on archival principles rather than for production purposes.

Barr 1996

OUTCOMES OF THE BARR REPORT

No progress was made on the long term recommendation and in 2011 there was still no National Broadcasting Archive.

As far as the short term recommendations were concerned the major outcome was that in 1997 both services were offered up for tender. The television tender was won by the New Zealand Film Archive while RNZ maintained the contract for SA/NTK. NZ On Air argued at the time that 'with the proliferation of broadcasters, all screening a varied range of New Zealand programming, it was now important that an independent archive, operating on a non-profit basis, take on the archiving role for all television broadcast material' (Dominion Post 1997:7). The move 'disappointed' TVNZ, but the Film Archive 'pledged to work with TVNZ to preserve TVNZ's collection of programmes'. Thus in quick time TVNZ, which was in the process of building a state of the art \$7 million purpose built archive 'designed to preserve New Zealand's video and film history indefinitely' (Dominion Post 2002:2), was absolved from any

cultural or moral responsibility for caretaking the nation's television broadcasting heritage. The burden was transferred to the NZFA, a trust with few capital resources, governed by volunteers, and dependent on outside support to exist.

So I think NZ On Air's decision to take the funding away from TVNZ is justified and I think NZ On Air has continued to try and be proactive, and that is a characteristic of NZ On Air's best activities, they don't wait for it to happen, it is not business as usual, they try and go out and make things a little better.

Horrocks 2010

Ironically, even although radio in New Zealand had a greater proliferation of broadcasters than television could or would ever achieve, NZ On Air felt comfortable in allowing RNZ to continue to operate SA/NTK perhaps on the grounds that NZ On Air 'had a little more confidence in them' because they maintained a strong public broadcasting arm (Horrocks 2010). A further irony was that given that the NZ Film Archive was required to archive 'a broad selection of programmes from' all other TV broadcasters, and remain an independent non-profit organisation, SA/NTK continued to archive almost exclusively RNZ programmes and remained a subsidiary of a Crown Entity.

In the wake of the Barr Report NZ On Air appointed an external consultant to conduct regular reviews of the archiving activities of both NZFA and SA/NTK and these reviews were part of the contracts negotiated with each archive. Initially the reviews were carried out by the retired director of the NZFA, Jonathan Dennis. Following his untimely death, academic and broadcast historian Roger Horrocks took up the role for NZFA and broadcast educator Brian Pauling became the reviewer for RNZ. These six monthly reviews continued as part of each archive's contract arrangements.

By 1999 NZ On Air was spending close to \$1 million on radio and television archiving. Following a change of government this increased to \$1.184 by 2002.

The change of government and a consequent change of attitude towards cultural institutions including broadcasting led to a number of developments. Those that impacted on NZ On Air and broadcasting archives included the establishment of an independent Archives New Zealand and National Library, the

latter with increased responsibilities to collect and archive 'electronic records', a public broadcasting Charter for TVNZ, a beefed up Ministry of Culture and Heritage with overall responsibilities for archiving policies, a Public Records Act requiring accuracy in all government records and their full preservation and the establishment of a Maori Television Channel.

THE HORROCKS/PAULING REPORT

A further report was commissioned in 2003. The authors were the reviewers of the NZFA and SA/TNK respectively. This report reiterated many most of the perennial issues that were increasingly familiar to the sector. Specifically the report highlighted:

- Major gaps in archiving local content that included pay television, regional television, commercial, community and Maori radio, and Maori television, and the fact that, one of the main free-to-air broadcasters (TV ONE/TV2) was being archived much more thoroughly than the other (TV3/TV4) and that TVNZ's in-house production tended to be more thoroughly archived than independently-made programming. It suggested that the lack of archiving for Maori programmes may have been in breach of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- The threats and opportunities from digitalisation, arguing that the idea of cultural archiving was at that stage not firmly embedded within the world of digital. There were substantial costs involved in funding the new digital equipment requirements, the increased cataloguing costs, and development of new skills and handling the 'complex trade-offs' that are required in a small country when facing paradigm shifts.
- The use of digitalisation processes to encourage the broadcasting industry to adopt a new approach to archiving. For example, much of the metadata needed to classify material and assist retrieval could be created at the time of production.
- The lack of complementarity between the TVNZ and the NZFA archives. It argued that while production libraries can co-exist with archives, and some overlap is desirable since it increases the odds that a programme will survive somewhere, lack of coordination was not a happy situation in a small country and was a waste of scarce resources.

- Consider whether the principle of mandatory deposit, already applied to books, could potentially (through the National Library Act) be applied to electronic ‘publishing’.

One suggestion offered by the report was that:

NZ On Air could organise a symposium on cultural archiving, bringing archives and politicians together to discuss gaps and issues of coordination. The symposium would also consider changes in the environment such as digitalisation; the changing roles, responsibilities, and practices of archivists; the development of a national information (or cultural) architecture; coordination in terms of cataloguing and metadata; philosophies of selection; and the relationship between the current needs of analogue and digital archiving.

Horrocks/Pauling 2003:26

The report also made an attempt to define NZ On Air’s roles and responsibilities in archiving and concluded that while objects may be kept for a number of different reasons, such as: accountability (records can be valuable as documentation or evidence), re-use (records can have a continuing commercial value, for sales or production use) and cultural value (records can have historical and/or aesthetic value), NZ On Air is legislatively concerned with ‘culture and identity’, and therefore primarily concerned with the cultural function of archiving.

As a result of the review, NZ On Air entered into a contract with the NZFA for a further three years at \$574,000 per year and with RNZ for two years at \$530,000 per year.

ARCHIVE SYMPOSIUM

The recommended symposium was eventually held in November 2004. All major archives were represented along with a number of government and non-government agencies. The keynote address was given by the late Sam Kula, founder and first director of the National Archives of Canada where he established the film, sound and television section.

The outcomes from the seminar had a familiar ring and included:

- The need for broadcasting and other forms of audio-visual archiving to receive their fair share of attention and funding as they were considered a hugely important part of the country’s creative culture. The overall level of funding for audio-visual archiving in this country was under pressure as the size of collections and the numbers of broadcasters continue to increase. Digitalisation had many potential benefits for audio-visual collections, but there was a danger that the amount of attention currently focused on the problems of archiving websites, e-mails, and other new types of digital text could lead to a neglect of broadcast media.
- A need to address the existing gaps in archiving, the result of the rapid expansion of broadcasting and historical or organisational factors. Regional broadcasting was an area that deserved more attention, and a panel on ‘The Maori Dimension’ argued that much iwi radio was not being covered. In general the private sector was archived much less thoroughly than the public sector. The explosion of new forms and new broadcasters presented archives with difficult choices as they sought to document New Zealand’s changing culture.
- The need for the government to legislate to specifically protect the TVNZ archive and explicitly add archiving to the forthcoming TVNZ charter.
- Taking a further step into the digital age with a ‘virtual national collection’, assembling all that can be brought together online, alongside such initiatives as Te Ara (MCH’s online Encyclopaedia of New Zealand).

Practitioners called for the standardisation of metadata, while still allowing different collections to have different emphases, and still permitting users to navigate in different ways through the same collection. Such standards would increase the ease of access and use by the general public which was a strong theme of the opening address by the Minister of Broadcasting, Steve Maharey.

It was suggested that the re-broadcasting of historical programmes was a powerful form of public access. While there was the complexity of rights issues it was suggested that broadcasters could create more opportunities for such screenings.

SYMPOSIUM OUTCOMES

In 2005 NZ On Air stated that it was 'continuing to evaluate possibilities for better coordination between organisations responsible for audio-visual archiving' (NZ On Air 2004/2005:12).

By 2007 NZ On Air was spending \$1.264m on radio and television archiving services. It had picked up on the 2004 symposium comments about the need for greater digitalisation and 'explored options arising from opportunities offered by digital'. The NZFA was funded in both 2007 and 2008 to purchase digitising equipment so it could 'move forward with its strategy to enhance public access to archived material'. Significantly NZ On Air picked up on a further idea initially floated in a report for NZ On Air on *Public Broadcasting in the Digital Age* and reinforced by the symposium that suggested NZ On Air explore the 'feasibility of a portal to celebrate New Zealand's screen culture and enable unprecedented access by New Zealanders to a broad range of moving image history' (Norris & Pauling 2005:10). NZ on Screen was established in 2008 (see p 125).

THE SA/NTK TENDER

In one of the very few 'missteps' in NZ On Air's handling of its archive responsibilities, in 2008 it unexpectedly put out to tender the contract for radio archiving. This came as a surprise to the current contractor RNZ and there appeared to have been little consultation or preparation for the tender. Only two responses to the tender were received, one from SA/NTK and one from the Radio Heritage Foundation (RHF). Little thought appears to have been given to the only alternatives available, if the successful tender came from other than SA/NTK then that source would need to either spend considerable resources establishing an archiving facility or take over the existing facility from SA/NTK.

Given the long historical association that SA/NTK has had with RNZ and the investment that the public broadcaster had made in the archive there was little likelihood of RNZ readily giving over its resources. Also RHF was a small charitable trust which did not demonstrate any access to the considerable funds that would be needed to replicate the archive's capital assets.

There were both logistical and legal difficulties with this. SA/NTK was a fully owned subsidiary of Radio New Zealand, a Crown entity created by the Radio New Zealand Act in 1995. As such it would lay claim to its assets and strongly resist attempts to remove them. In fact in its tender document it hinted at this stating that it 'expect[s] to continue to receive government funding for [radio archiving] activity'. It argued strongly that any 'material archived after June 30 [2008] should not be handed over to another organisation (in full or in part) now or in the future' and flatly stated that any contestable process 'puts archival collections at risk....[and is] a potential interruption [which is] unacceptable'.

NZ On Air quickly 'recovered' and accepted the tender from SA/NTK. But while the tender process was perhaps inopportune it did permit the airing of a number of issues that were critical of the Archive and NZ On Air had the opportunity to highlight these, some of which were:

- There had been a steady increase in the volume of audio material being broadcast in New Zealand
 - by traditional terrestrial transmission, satellite, fibre, cable, or internet, on a free-to-air, pay, or pay-per-listen basis. Patterns of listening were changing in New Zealand as young people particularly sought other means to satisfy their needs for sound (e.g. podcasts, itunes, internet radio etc).
- New Zealand had in 2008 arguably the largest and most diverse radio ecology - strong public broadcasting, student, access, community, iwi, ethnic, talkback, and a viable and vibrant commercial radio market (with the largest percentage take of total advertising revenue of any radio market).
- As digital infuses this radio environment, it will further complicate attempts to fully and accurately provide an historical record of New Zealand's radio culture in our time.

- The tendering process highlighted an imbalance between RNZ and non-RNZ content in the number of hours recorded, with specifically RNZ material accounting for 50%. No doubt this was the result of historical antecedents harking back to the times when the state broadcaster was the only broadcaster or, as it was for most of the 70's and 80's, the dominant broadcaster. But in 2008 RNZ could no longer claim this predominance being only a small portion of the 'nearly 2 million hours of radio programmes originating annually from some 225+ radio stations' (Radio Heritage 2008). While a large proportion of that programming would be popular music originating off-shore and not of appropriate interest to a New Zealand archive there is no doubt that the range of private, commercial and community radio programmes originated by New Zealanders outside of RNZ is much larger than that reflected in the SA/TNK accession policy existing at the time. RNZ will probably always feature strongly in the archive line-up because it is the country's major radio provider of news, current affairs, documentaries and comment. But at 50% it may be too dominant.
- New technology enables the off-air recording of hundreds of radio channels at the same time, and blue sky storage of digital content. This highlighted the fact that while technology enables accessing at one end of the archive process, it creates considerable problems further downstream. Recording hundreds of radio channels is fine but what are the scale and costs of the resources needed to then process such a quantity of data (transfer to an accession platform, catalogue, reference and store)?

If nothing else this exercise provided NZ On Air with a range of data that would prove useful in its dealings with SA/NTK in the future.

NZ ON SCREEN

By the end of 2007 the NZ On Screen Trust was established. The Trust was created, in part, to answer the Symposium call for ongoing access to local and publicly funded programming and to address the issue of most local content only being seen once or twice and remaining relatively inaccessible to the general public thereafter. Within a year it had developed

a marvellously eclectic range of content - from Gloss to Patu! to a rare Janet Frame documentary. It started with over 200 titles, a videoblog and a range of interviews with directors, producers and other industry figures.

NZ On Screen 2008

There is a sense in which the NZ On Air initiative in establishing NZ On Screen was pioneering. Despite many obstacles it led the way in developing an on-line public access service for New Zealand content that could be considered a model for other archive institutions. Horrocks suggests that there was 'luke-warm support and sometimes outright obstruction from other organisations, and initial suspicion within the industry' (Horrocks, 2012). It is a tribute to NZ On Air that so many programme-makers have permitted, at no cost, NZ On Screen to use their material. Horrocks (2012) calls it 'an amazing demonstration of the community feeling that can exist within the production industry' and 'a display of collective support for a non-profit public-spirited venture that represents one important dimension of what archiving is about.'

Since its launch the site has received widespread praise from users and is heavily referenced by other websites and blogs around the world. It won the Best Entertainment Website in the Qantas Media Awards in 2009, at which it was also a finalist for Best Website Design. In addition, it was a nominee in the e-Culture and Heritage category of the World Summit Awards.

THE HORROCKS, LABRUM AND HOPKINS REVIEW

NZ On Air was becoming increasingly concerned about the tensions in the archiving sector, the apparent confusion around accountabilities and the inability of any one agency to resolve these issues. Accordingly in 2009 NZ On Air initiated a further review of the NZFA claiming that 'there are issues facing the screen archiving sector which no single funder can deal with alone'. For this review Roger Horrocks was joined by Meg Labrum, Chief Curator of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, and Stephanie Hopkins, from the production industry.

On this occasion NZ On Air involved the NZ Film Commission, Te Mangai Paho and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, all of whom provided some funding to the NZFA. Again the primary issues were the perennial ones: was the NZFA using best practice archiving principles, was there any unnecessary duplication and were there any significant gaps.

In a sense the review played like a 'broken record'. It confirmed that there was 'still not a high level of understanding of the role and philosophy of an archive (as distinct from a production library or commercial facility) within the production community', there were problems with lack of appropriate archival storage space, a large backlog of material awaiting preservation, communications problems, especially with the production industry, an 'unwieldy' governance structure and complex funding streams. It also argued that the Archive was underfunded.

Among its suggestions for change were:

- Administration/structure - NZFA's governance structure needed to be re-examined. The Archive began as a small scale initiative by enthusiasts but had become a large, national institution. The current small scale governance model risked becoming ingrown and unable to represent the diversity of national interests or the necessary range of governance skills required of a large and responsive organisation. Perhaps the Archive could become some form of Crown Entity (as the Historic Places Trust has recently become).

- Funding - there were two issues, the funding structure and the need for funds. The Archive's 'independence' was somewhat undermined by the fact that approximately 85% of its funding came from the Crown through several organizations. The funding streams from public sector organizations could be combined under the administration of one body (MCH?), which could then give the Archive a unified mandate. There was a need to seek emergency funding from any interested stakeholder or sponsor for supporting the immediate needs of gaining extra space (the Archive had purchased land at Plimmerton on which it hoped to create a purpose-specific storage facility, but needed to raise \$750,000 to complete the project).

- Digitising/preservation/access - two of the Archive's activities, 'collect' and 'connect,' may be said to have outstripped its other activity 'protect.' Preservation was currently under-resourced. There was a need to change priorities to ensure immediate preservation and, where necessary restoration, of endangered material. Digitising for preservation should be given at least as much emphasis as public access. International best practice insisted upon retaining original (analogue) material even when it has been digitised (Horrocks et al 2009).

In 2010 one of the major recommendations from the report was acted on. To remove the difficulties associated with multiple funding sources for the NZFA, funding previously allocated by NZ On Air to the NZFA was transferred to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Other funding sources would also be channelled through MCH. To assist with emergency preservation work the NZFA also received an additional \$2 million grant through MCH.

Having removed NZFA from its immediate responsibilities NZ On Air turned its attention to SA/NTK by commissioning a review of its activities. At the time of writing, the review had not been published. NZ On Air was considering the implications of the review.

CONCLUSION

One reading of this overview could suggest that NZ On Air was always a reluctant 'groom' to the archiving 'bride'. From the very beginning there was hesitancy. To continue the analogy, NZ On Air did not seek a 'monogamous' relationship, rather it saw itself as one among a suite of suitors. However, being left to, as it were, 'carry the baby' it made a consistent and valiant attempt at guardianship. Its inheritance didn't help. Both SA/TNK and TVNZ Archives were treated by their owners as production libraries and there was not a culture of archival curatorship within those organisations.

NZ On Air took over responsibilities at a time of significant growth in broadcast output coupled with an increasing diversity of broadcasters providing that output. It began the relationship in the dying years of analogue technologies and struggled with the uncertainties of a new and insatiable digital world. The wider archive environment within New Zealand was fragmented and lacking in leadership.

As the very first NZ On Air review, the Barr Report, noted back in 1996, there was no national sound and vision archive and there still isn't. With the increased power of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, and the establishment of an independent Archives New Zealand and National Library which occurred early in the new millennium some form of direction and guidance could have been expected but was not forthcoming. Moreover the financial 'prospects' for relationships between the archiving agencies were never good. Archiving was and still is significantly underfunded for the tasks expected of it.

Despite this the archiving of broadcasting programmes of importance to New Zealand continued and NZ On Air strived to be a good steward. In the twenty years it carried out four major reviews, negotiated contracts that required archiving organisations to be subject to six-monthly independent evaluation of performance and steadily increased the amount of available funding.

Very early on NZ On Air's primary activities became focused on providing resources for maximising the output of New Zealand broadcasting content. Its kaupapa was production. It struggled from the beginning with meeting its archiving responsibilities and acknowledged that archiving was not core business, it didn't sit comfortably with a production focused organisation and was therefore not a priority. In 2011, twenty years on, it appears only now that the relationship will at last be 'annulled'.

CHAPTER 14

MUSIC

A lot of people think [the NZ On Air music schemes] are very effective and the 2% to 20% statistic is pretty much a full stop at the end of a sentence. When you say it used to be 2% and it is now 20% on the radio people go wow that is amazing. It is almost like the trump card that says we have done this, we have invested this and this is what we have achieved.

Smyth 2011

BACKGROUND

In its first year of operation in 1989, NZ On Air concentrated on what were termed the 'big ticket' items (Smyth, 2011). Armed with the new Broadcasting Act and a number of Ministerial Directives, NZ On Air collected \$82 million from the broadcasting fee and distributed it over six priority areas, Radio New Zealand and community access radio, television programme funding, Maori radio, remote transmission coverage, the NZ Symphony Orchestra and broadcasting archives. All of these are covered in other chapters. It wasn't until 1991 that NZ On Air began to address Section 37(d). This section of the Broadcasting Act 1989 required the newly established Broadcasting Commission (NZ On Air) to provide on radio 'for the production and broadcasting of New Zealand drama and for the broadcasting of New Zealand music'.

NZ On Air presumed the natural home for radio drama as being Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and while there were arguments around whether RNZ was doing enough and how it classified drama – is reading a book on air really 'drama' (Smyth 2011) – NZ On Air considered radio drama production to be primarily the responsibility of RNZ. (A small number of short dramas, radio serials and comedy programmes were funded on commercial radio from time to time, see Chapter 12.)

When it came to music however it was a different story. Brendan Smyth, Music Manager for NZ On Air, talks about carrying out 'a kind of gap analysis'. If there was a lack of New Zealand music on radio just where was that gap to be identified? A 'review' of radio stations in 1991 showed that National Radio's play list was 20% New Zealand music. Student radio at the time was playing more than 30%, the existing community access radio stations were making a feature of playing local music as were the Maori iwi stations. However these stations combined catered for less than 20% of the radio audience. The so-called 'elephant in the room' was the commercial radio stations with 80% of the audience and at that time playing less than 2% New Zealand music.

So there is the problem, if there is a problem of not enough New Zealand music on radio it is not on so-called public radio it is on commercial radio. That is where there is not enough New Zealand music.

Smyth 2011

A simple answer to the problem would be the imposing of a music quota. This was the position taken by the New Zealand music industry. The Independent Music Producers Association argued before the parliamentary committee reviewing the Broadcasting Bill that 'if you are going to deregulate broadcasting New Zealand music will be a casualty' (Smyth 2011). They suggested a 10-20% New Zealand music quota. A government keen to deregulate was not sympathetic to calls for re-regulation. Their response was to place the responsibility for the health of broadcast New Zealand music squarely with NZ On Air under Section 37(d). It wasn't until 2002 that voluntary quotas were agreed between the government and commercial radio.

While there was a 'feeling' that New Zealand music on commercial radio play lists was very low in 1991, when NZ On Air first engaged with funding music on radio, it was not until 1994 that research commissioned by the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand (RIANZ) confirmed it as being below 2% (McPherson 1994). At that time the industry was developing a Recording Arts and Producers Fund (the RAP Fund) the purpose of which was to use a portion of the royalties the industry received from radio stations for airplay to

help fund local recording artists and producers who registered as fund participants. RIANZ, at the time, was of the belief that local music would have been of the order of 10%, and thus a reasonable quota to extract revenue from. McPherson's figure of 1.9% came as something of a shock to the industry.

This then was the background as NZ On Air began its New Zealand music on radio activities.

THE BEGINNINGS (PHASE ONE)

NZ On Air's music funding history falls into five phases. This chapter will follow the chronology of those phases as it develops the history of NZ On Air New Zealand music funding.

At its June 1991 meeting the NZ On Air Board determined that it would:

switch our policy approach in the coming year from funding further broadcasters to funding radio programmes which feature and promote New Zealand music

NZ On Air 1991

The aforementioned 'gap analysis' resulted in a decision that focused the policy towards the development of New Zealand music on commercial radio and while the resources that NZ On Air committed to music did spread to other outlets (see below) it was done thinly. The predominant expenditure was on accessing the commercial radio playlists and the decision to do so influenced the shape and the development of New Zealand popular music for the next 20 years.

The release of the first *New Zealand Music Plan* in June 1991 called for applications to support 'the production of radio programmes about New Zealand music for broadcast on New Zealand radio stations' and a music video funding scheme. The video scheme gave 'priority to videos which support[ed] the release in New Zealand of recordings of New Zealand music'. To limit applications the scheme required the confirmed backing and financial contribution of a record company and the maximum funding available per video was \$5,000. Both programmes were pilots to be evaluated after one year.

One of the reasons NZ On Air funded videos was a recognition of the fact that the rise of music television influenced the choice of music young people listened to and therefore directly influenced what radio stations put in their playlists. The videos were a tool to increase access to the radio airwaves. But, as a bonus, they also increased local music exposure on television.

The 1992 NZ On Air annual report pronounced the success of these two developments, stating that 758 hours of New Zealand music were broadcast over student radio stations (e.g. Campus Radio bFM's *Freak the Sheep*, Radio Massey's *Sheep Bleat Silver Fern Show*), the Pagan Records-produced one hour *Counting the Beat* show profiling New Zealand music on 14 commercial radio stations nationwide, and 56 New Zealand music videos produced for television screening. The radio shows cost NZ On Air \$300,000 and the videos \$280,000.

NZ On Air argued that the achievement of these two schemes:

demonstrated tangible progress in fulfilling the Section 37(d) requirement[s]...positioned NZ On Air as a major player in the New Zealand music industry...achieved cost effective exposure for New Zealand music on both radio and television.

NZ On Air 1992

PHASE TWO

Buoyed with the initial success, in 1993 NZ On Air launched two new projects – the Kiwi Hit Disc and the Radio Hits Funding Scheme. The thinking behind the Kiwi Hit Disc was that the funding of a New Zealand music programme from time to time was 'not solving the problem'. It was seen as a form of 'ghetto programming'. What was really needed was 'to infiltrate the play list' (Smyth 2011).

Every time you go to a select committee hearing..... the radio stations will say we would love to play more New Zealand music but we can't get our hands on it.

Smyth 2011

Based on a successful formula used in the United States where music programming companies compile new music onto a CD and distribute the CD to radio stations, NZ On Air created its own play list of New Zealand music, compiled it onto a CD and distributed copies free to every New Zealand radio outlet every two months. (Most commercial radio stations in New Zealand already subscribed to one or more of the US distribution services.)

There was an interesting and somewhat ad hoc method in choosing the songs that would be included in the Kiwi Hit Disc. The call went out to record companies to offer their current music and NZ On Air would tout these around a range of radio programmers seeking approval or disapproval of each track. This form of 'audition' would lead to a list of songs that were considered conducive to being played on commercial radio. These were then pressed to the CD and the resulting disc distributed to New Zealand music stations. In later years the informal audition process was replaced with NZ On Air deciding the tracks internally.

This behaviour was the music version of the television policy that required a broadcaster to commit to a programme before NZ On Air would fund it. NZ On Air has no way of compelling any broadcaster to broadcast a programme. Very quickly it realised that it could only get its programmes to air if the broadcaster agreed. So lobbying broadcasters quickly became a major NZ On Air task. Thus seeking radio programmers' support for a music track before committing resources to it was considered to be a prudent action.

The Radio Hits Funding Scheme was a further effort to get around the problem of funding music which then turned out to not be playable as a radio hit.

The conundrum was succinctly put:

We can't fund a song by an artist unless we know it is going to get played, and we can't know it is going to get played, so we can't fund it'

It was an incentive funding scheme that operated retrospectively. If a local record company delivered a song to radio and it got on the station's play list then NZ On Air would assist in cost recovery by paying up to \$5,000 per song back to the record company. NZ On Air saw it as a 'reward-oriented funding scheme'.

It would appear from the 1993 annual report that NZ On Air was more than satisfied with the music programme, stating that it could 'claim a good deal of the credit' for more New Zealand music being in the popular music charts than 'in any one of the previous 20 years – more than twice the entries in 1992 compared with 1991'. And in 1994, while having the same number of records in the charts, the fact that four local artists supported by NZ On Air actually topped the charts and another 13 made it to the top ten had NZ On Air claiming that nothing 'matches the success seen in 1994' (NZ On Air 1994/1995).

It was at this stage that NZ On Air moved away from being just a funding agency and in a sense became their own record company. The Kiwi Hit Disc was the first time they actively moved into promotions and marketing in a serious way. A mix of strategies was developed. NZ On Air took artists on tour around the country showcasing and promoting their hits. They created a Double Digits Campaign, a slogan for a promotion that rewarded radio stations when they reached 10% of air time for New Zealand music.

PHASE THREE

Be that as it may, it still appeared to be a struggle to get the air play NZ On Air expected. 'It was one thing to get the songs into the hands of the radio stations. The real task was to get the songs off the disc and onto the play list' (Smyth 2011). NZ On Air continued its move from being a resource into directly promoting its wares. It employed what is known in the music industry as a 'plugger', someone active and respected in the music business who went around the stations directly lobbying for air play time for the Kiwi Hit Disc using 'all the tactics and tricks that you use to get songs into their [programme managers] consciousness' (Smyth 2011). Record companies had used pluggers successfully for a number of years. NZ On Air employed Nicole Gilbert for this role. 'She had every one of the attributes needed for a plugger...she was 110% committed to New Zealand music...and not afraid to go in and go to bat' (Smyth 2011). There was clear enthusiasm for taking this more proactive stance.

We gave her a shot and never looked back. [NZ On Air was] seriously out there in the field going into radio stations saying, hey, play some more New Zealand music, here is the Hit Disc, 12 songs are wrong for you, don't even bother with them. These four songs are right for you.

Smyth 2011

Meanwhile on the video side, in 1993 NZ On Air received a boost with the opening in Auckland of the new music channel Max and in Christchurch Cry TV. Since the scheme was launched in 1991 164 videos had been released receiving a total of 1,500 screenings on national television. By adding the exposure these clips gained on the new music channels the total leapt to over 8,200 plays. By 1995 there were five syndicated radio programmes broadcast on commercial radio and over 300 videos had received over 50,000 screenings 'contributing to a high presence and profile for New Zealand music' (NZ On Air 1994/1995).

Soon after, NZ On Air carried out its first significant review of its music schemes. The 1996 review concluded 'that a total of 170 records by New Zealand artists have entered the singles charts compared with 89 in the four years prior to NZ On Air's intervention. Some credit for this revival must be due to NZ On Air's schemes'. A key recommendation from this review was that 'NZ On Air reaffirm its commitment to using an assessment of broadcast potential as the primary determinant of music video funding'. It also supported the role of pluggers and confirmed the validity of the 'current method of assessing airplay potential' – using tracks identified by record company and artist to test the interest of radio stations (NZ On Air 1996). Interestingly, the report suggested that NZ On Air might like to 'carefully consider the Youth Radio Network (YRN) option' if it proved a more effective way of 'getting more New Zealand music played across the board' (see p 132). Also in 1996 an independent survey of commercial radio music play lists was carried out which concluded that New Zealand music content was just under 10% indicating a significant upwards trend from the 1.9% noted in the McPherson report three years earlier (RIANZ 1996).

The Kiwi Hit Disc format focused on the youth market. There were a number of radio networks and stations that catered for an older audience for whom this music was inappropriate. To further push New Zealand music content and capture an interest from the older demograph a new Kiwi Hit Disc format – Kiwi Gold Disc – was launched in 1996 featuring New Zealand music from the years 1960 to 1990. In 1997 another new format called Indie Hit Disc appeared, its role being to promote new music with an alternative edge to it bridging the gap between student radio and commercial radio.

Continuing its proactive marketing approach to New Zealand music, in 1997 NZ On Air formed an alliance with music industry groups to form the Kiwi Music Action Group (Kiwi MAG). The idea was to 'cooperate to promote airplay for New Zealand music on commercial radio'. Kiwi MAG launched the first Kiwi Music Week in April 1997 when radio stations throughout the country linked for a nationwide campaign featuring local music.

THE YOUTH RADIO NETWORK

In its 1997 Annual Report NZ On Air made its position clear about the proposed Youth Radio Network. The YRN was an idea pushed by music enthusiasts and it eventually led to the establishment of a Ministerial committee to review a YRN option. That option was accepted and proposals were put to the government in 2001. Resistance from commercial radio networks and also from NZ On Air to the proposal meant that it failed to ignite the interest of enough politicians to get traction.

While the primary purpose of the YRN was 'to connect young New Zealanders via radio' (Prowse 2011), a similar goal to the Australian ABC-funded Triple J Network, it was also suggested that such a station would naturally increase the amount of New Zealand music content on radio. But NZ On Air argued there were already about 40 radio stations in the country directed at and successful in attracting the youth audience – both commercial radio and student radio stations. Commercial radio was likely to continue to command the biggest audience share across all ages and it was critical that New Zealand music was well represented there. Any plans to develop a YRN 'should not be at the expense of efforts to promote the presence of New Zealand music on mainstream commercial radio' (Prowse 2011).

By the end of the decade NZ On Air was spending nearly \$2.5 million on a range of activities that included the production of music videos, funding of radio programmes on both commercial radio and student radio, the Radio Hits Funding Scheme, Kiwi Hit Discs, Kiwi Gold Discs, Indie Hit Discs, the employment of a full-time radio plugger and supporting promotional events such as Kiwi Music Week. Airplay of New Zealand music reached 10% by 1999. NZ On Air summed up its first decade of promoting New Zealand music:

While there is more new Zealand music on commercial radio now than in the past two years, it is still not enough and NZ On Air will continue to campaign vigorously.

NZ On Air 2000: 15

PHASE FOUR

In 1999 with the election of the Labour-led government there was a more sympathetic approach to cultural funding. NZ On Air benefited from this with its New Zealand music budget jumping to \$3.78 million, a large increase. It coincided with the release of what NZ On Air dubbed as Phase Four of its music policy.

Phase Four was still based on the premise that:

NZ On Air [was] in the airplay business... helping to create hit records by partnering with record companies to invest more in the making and marketing of New Zealand music to get more New Zealand music on commercial radio

Smyth 2011

Further, there was an initial feeling that the new government would support some form of music quota in broadcasting, so an added incentive was that if that happened and 'the Government invests in creating the hit records [NZ On Air funded music] will feed the quota' (Smyth 2011).

So as well as 'business as usual' three more strands were added to the tools to make more of New Zealand music. They were:

MAKING & MARKETING : INTERNATIONAL

This was an offer of contestable funding for the international marketing of albums that have first proved successful in New Zealand. NZ On Air would contribute \$50,000 to each project if matched by an equal amount from a record company. There would be funds to promote four albums a year. The aim was 'to help proven bands and artists to move to the next stage and to generate the kind of earnings that will encourage the record company to continue to invest in those artists' (NZ On Air 2000).

MAKING & MARKETING : ALBUMS

This plan had a similar format but was aimed at supporting albums for the local market. NZ On Air would offer contestable funding for the recording of 12 or more new albums a year by bands with proven commercial radio airplay credentials. Again, the funding would be on a matching basis with up to \$50,000 per project available if matched by a record company. 'Commercial radio airplay credibility will be the over-riding consideration. The partnership with record companies is the key' (Smyth 2011).

MAKING & MARKETING: NEW RECORDING ARTISTS

This was to encourage development by finding and funding new bands with the potential for commercial radio airplay via a new New Recording Artists Scheme. The scheme would fund at least 40 new recording artist projects by providing \$5,000 for each project. 'It's like an R&D fund. The idea here is to seed new projects - find new bands that might give us the radio hits of the future' (Smyth 2011).

Two other, smaller ventures would also be funded, remixing for radio where the costs of remixing a track to make it more suitable for commercial airplay would be met by NZ On Air and joint ventures with the newly created New Zealand Music Commission to promote New Zealand music using workshops, seminars and other educational and promotional activities to encourage participation in New Zealand music.

It was considered that all in all these new ventures would 'give an unprecedented boost to the campaign to get more New Zealand music on air' (Smyth 2011).

Also, in 1999 a fourth member of the Kiwi Hit Disc family was launched, Kiwi Hit Disc A/C (adult/contemporary).

The significance of the Phase Four plan for the new government was confirmed when it was launched by the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, at an industry function in Auckland on 28 July 2000.

TELEVISION INITIATIVES

NZ On Air argued that 'more music television was always seen as a key to getting more New Zealand music played on commercial radio' and its commitment to television music videos increased in 2002 when it entered into a partnership with TV2 and a private production company Satellite Media Group to create M2 – a new music 'channel' that was to play overnight, midnight-to-dawn, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays on TV2. The venture was to feature at least 33% New Zealand music and would treble the free-to-air hours of music television every week. The initial investment by NZ On Air was \$400,000. M2 lasted just eighteen months coming to an end in March 2004. During its short existence M2 played over 4,718 New Zealand music videos and kept an 'on-going ratio of at least 33% Kiwi content and debuting numerous new videos and acts' (Satellite Media 2004).

But, as the 2004 NZ On Air Annual Report commented, when one door closed on this 'stylish, adventurous music television...another opens and before [2003's] end CanWest [owner of TV3 and TV4] rebranded TV4 as a music channel playing seven nights a week, prime time hours, free-to-air to 70%+ of the country with substantial New Zealand music content'. A further boost to the television content happened at the same time with Juice TV's decision to simulcast free-to-air via a UHF channel in Auckland. All of this 'changed music television overnight and meant that music videos, funded by NZ On Air as part of the drive to increase local content on the radio, started getting unprecedented exposure' (NZ On Air 2003/2004:9).

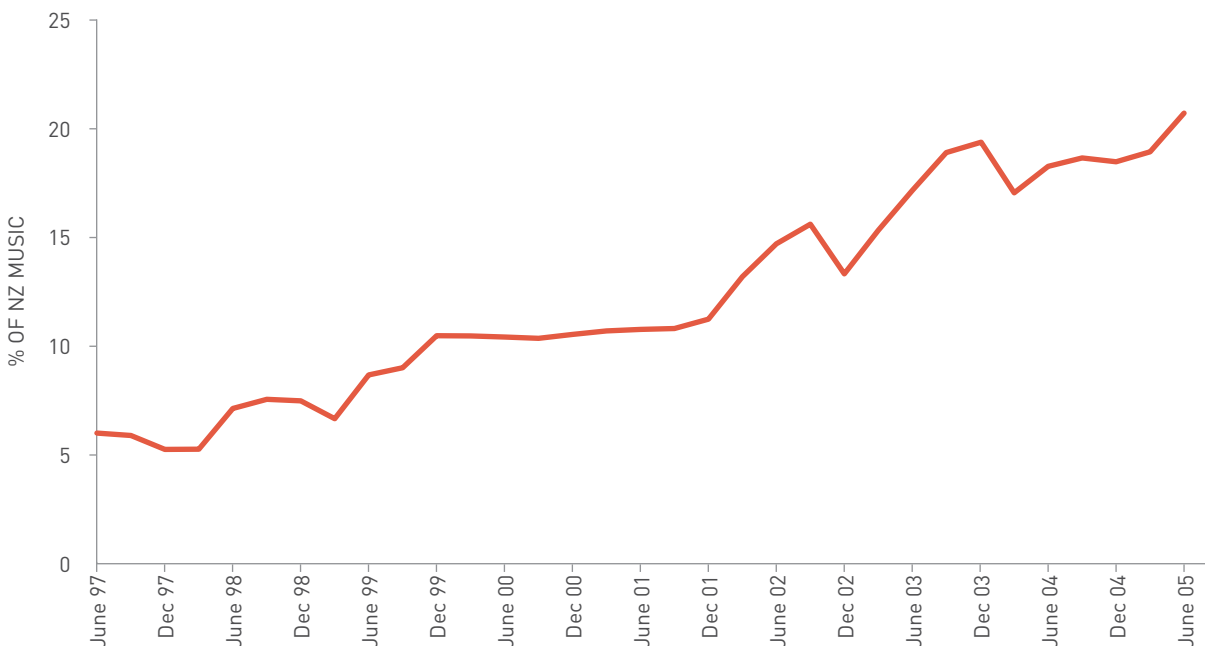
The next few years could be considered the 'golden years' of New Zealand music. In June 2002 New Zealand music content on commercial radio reached just under 15%, a substantial 41% increase from two years earlier. By 2004 it reached 18% overall with a record 33% on Rock radio, and by 2006 it broke through the 20% aspirational barrier. In 2003 NZ On Air celebrated a number of successes including reaching the milestone of 1,000 NZ On Air-funded music videos, the release of the first Kiwi Hit Disc, bringing to five the number of formats in the series and, early in 2004 the release of the third NZ On Air Kiwi Gold Disc classic hits compilation.

THE VOLUNTARY MUSIC QUOTA

NZ On Air's efforts were not alone in creating this success. In 2002 the government, initially interested in imposing a New Zealand music quota on commercial radio, eventually agreed to a voluntary quota with the Radio Broadcasters Association. A New Zealand Music Code was established. This voluntary code committed commercial radio to a series of local music content targets over five years. The targets were to rise, format by format, year by year, to reach 20%, overall, by the end of 2006. The 2002 year-end target was 13% overall. NZ On Air 'pledged' its support to make the code work, and so did the stations. Over the next few years they exceeded the agreed targets on more than one occasion. In its 2003 report NZ On Air 'applauded' the commercial radio industry for achieving 'these remarkable results'.

In 2005 one of CanWest's radio stations, Channel Z, re-branded itself as Kiwi FM – a 100% New Zealand music radio network. In that year's annual report NZ On Air noted that 'Canwest's decision to devote three valuable main centre commercial frequencies to New Zealand music was a brave move and a milestone, demonstrating just how far New Zealand music has come from the dark days of less than 2% local content'. By the time the five-year New Zealand Music Code agreement ended in 2006 NZ On Air was able to report record levels of New Zealand music on the radio. The progress is illuminated in the chart below.

FIG 7 NZ MUSIC CONTENT 1997-2005



Source: NZ On Air Annual Report 2004/2005:9

But it appeared that a plateau had been reached. Local music content dropped marginally in 2006 and again in 2007. With the New Zealand Music Code contract being voluntarily renewed in 2007 for another five years the percentage returned to just above 20%. During that time NZ On Air's main music mission was to support the code and specifically, to feed the code.

The 2006 changes made to the New Artists programme resulted in the radio hits 'strike-rate' for new artists jumping from a 49% success rate to 75% in 2007, with seven New Recording Artists reaching the NZ Airplay Chart Top 40. NZ On Air also markedly increased its promotional activities funding new awards, supporting travelling artists and launching a series of 'radio showcases' (NZ On Air 2007:13).

In 2004 NZ On Air commissioned a report on 'the funding of radio and music' to review 'NZ On Air's processes'. The report by David Gascoigne was written at a time when criticism of NZ On Air's music policies was beginning to occur (see below). The report would have been confirming for NZ On Air. It showed support for the processes, indeed it was very complimentary, stating that:

NZ On Air has clear policies and objectives, and also has processes which give clear and effective expression to them....I have taken a healthy interest in NZ On Air's activities over the years, and I have detected no significantly concerning criticism recently about the way in which it goes about the task of funding radio and music.

Gascoigne 2005:2

While acknowledging that the 'various procedures' used to determine funding for New Zealand music were 'distinctive and, in some cases, complex' the report concluded that much more emphasis was given to 'objective and external' procedures than to the 'subjective internal views of the manager'. The report concluded that 'there is broad and general support within the music industry for the way in which NZ On Air gives effect to this portion of its remit' (Gascoigne 2005:18).

PHASE FIVE

In 2005 NZ On Air introduced Phase Five which expanded the promotion and marketing of New Zealand music overseas. The 2005 Annual Report identified the strategies of this Phase as:

- Producing special targeted New Zealand music samplers for distribution overseas and to selected New Zealand media
- Building an international radio and music media "tastemaker" network
- Taking space in key international radio industry trade magazines to profile New Zealand music
- Contracting agents in the target territories to service the samplers and maintain the tastemaker network and to "plug" New Zealand music on radio overseas
- Producing radio shows showcasing New Zealand music for national and international radio syndication

In that year the government provided extra funding of \$5.4 million for a four-year campaign to promote New Zealand music offshore. The initiative would be led by the New Zealand Music Commission with NZ On Air's support. NZ On Air's principal role was to focus on radio and music television promotion.

Phase Four funding criteria remained steady but two changes were made. Firstly the album funding criteria were relaxed lowering the level of airplay needed to be achieved before applicants could apply for funding. Secondly the number of new recording artists funded under the New Recording Artists Scheme was halved but the size of the grant doubled to \$10,000.

The Kiwi Hit Disc catalogue reached 83 volumes and as well as continued funding for music videos (160 were produced), NZ On Air funded programmes on C4 and Juice TV.

Part of the new Phase Five international music strategy involved working with industry to plug the work of New Zealand artists in the 'target territories' – Australia, the US, the UK and Canada. In 2006 two songs made it onto US playlists and one reached 'No. 10 most added song' on Australian radio. A Phase Five music sampler featured on the cover of an 'influential' UK trade magazine.

One question that was raised about the international goals of Phase Five was whether it complied with NZ On Air's statute. NZ On Air sought Crown Law advice and was told that while promoting New Zealand music internationally would not be considered core business it was compatible with NZ On Air's objectives (Julian 2011).

Until 2009 NZ On Air continued to be active internationally in partnership with the New Zealand Music Commission doing such things as showcasing New Zealand music at international trade shows and festivals, and plugging New Zealand music in the international media – 'radio, music television, trade publications, online' (NZ On Air 2009). They continued to develop the partnership with CMJ (the College Music Journal based in New York) in 'an attempt to infiltrate college radio in the US'. In the last year before the Caddick review (see below) NZ On Air spent \$750,000 on the promotion of New Zealand music, 13% of their annual music expenditure.

CRITICISM

Since the late 2000's open criticism of some of NZ On Air's policies had developed and in 2010 a number of articles of a critical nature were published. The complaints seem to broadly fall into a number of categories: complaints about the excessively 'commercial' nature of NZ On Air's music endeavours and the emphasis on economic success to the exclusion of creative or artistic success, the relationships with major record producers, questions around the accuracy of data, the continued focus on radio given changes in technology and the personalities involved in the process.

The emphasis on economic success has led to criticism that NZ On Air funds 'most heavily the artists which are in the best position to exist as profitable stand-alone business enterprises' (Greive 2010:17). It was suggested that NZ On Air had allowed NZ music to be defined as 'that which commercial radio will play' and in doing so have done a great disservice to the broad range of music that genuinely reflects the diversity of New Zealand culture. It concentrates its support on Auckland-based musicians to the exclusion of other parts of the country and seems to favour a range of artists at the exclusion of many key artists that are 'persistently overlooked' (Mayes 2010).

A question that may well be asked is, how well has NZ On Air helped facilitate music broadcasts for a range of the music genres catering for a broad range of New Zealanders, including special interests? Because NZ On Air's focus has been almost solely on commercial radio and youth music there is little in the way of information or comment from NZ On Air about what happens in other areas of music broadcast and how these listeners (and music makers) are served or not served by NZ On Air.

While historically NZ On Air's efforts have contributed to achieving the 20% airplay, 'the question must be asked whether [continuing to spend over \$2 million just to maintain this percentage] is effective use of public money' (Prowse 2010:5). Indeed the question could be: what was more influential in lifting the airplay on commercial radio to 20% – the voluntary quota or the NZ On Air expenditure/intervention? One answer could be that before 2002 NZ On Air, along with the industry lobbyists, got the result from 2% to 10%. But after 2002 it was mostly the voluntary quota that made the difference. This is suggested by the fact that the 20% result never increased after the voluntary target was achieved in 2006. This raises a bigger question about whether quotas (voluntary or otherwise) are more successful mechanisms than funding interventions through NZ On Air.

There has also been criticism of the relationship that had developed between NZ On Air and major record companies. Prowse (2010) suggested that NZ On Air's continued funding of music albums created unfair competition within the music industry. Unlike in television and film where few of the genres are produced without funding support, the 'vast majority of New Zealand music albums are produced solely with private funding'. They are cheap to produce compared to screen productions and many, if not most, 'can be commercially viable'.

Prowse is also critical of the way the subsidy is managed suggesting that some record companies could be inflating their costs to obtain the maximum \$50,000 contribution. Further criticism comes from Ruban Neilson, a musician who is 'deeply sceptical about whether anyone needs \$50,000 of taxpayers' money to make an album in 2010', and Auckland rapper Tourettes who argued that his 'last record cost \$3k, if you need more than \$10k you're wasting money' (Greive 2010:19).

This questions whether NZ On Air intervention in this area is even needed 'given the number of successful New Zealand albums that are made without public funding' (Prowse 2010:4).

Criticism surrounding the statistics focuses on the general nature of the data and on misleading data. The 20% of local content played by New Zealand commercial radio is the result of collating overall data from the stations. It gives no indication as to when the music is played and it doesn't take into consideration the time of broadcast.

A large part of commercial radio's voluntary New Zealand music quota could be played at low listening hours when very few people are tuned in...The full content of the 20% quota could be played when most of New Zealand sleeps thus the goal to get more New Zealanders to hear their own music is potentially undermined.

Mayes 2010:6

The emphasis is on a purely 'commercial quotient' used to calculate a 'social objective' (Mayes 2010:7). NZ On Air's data was also challenged. In its Statement of Intent for 2008-09 NZ On Air claimed there was an 85% Top 40 success rate for artists funded under the New Artists Recordings Scheme. Others have calculated the figure at being less than 20% (Walker cited in Mayes 2010).

Greive argues that a major issue is the fact that the NZ On Air music policy has changed little in 20 years, 'they still fund more music videos than anything else... and still pay the same rate (\$5,000 a pop) as they did in 1991' (Greive 2010:17). He suggests that NZ On Air has been ignoring social media, online music opportunities and other technologies such as 'music discovery' sources.

Some of the criticism has been personal and aimed at NZ On Air staff who are claimed 'to project an air of contempt, complete disinterest in what the community around them is saying' (Mayes 2010:6). Mayes argues for a change in leadership and staff claiming they are 'either unwilling or unable to find real solutions' and that others have 'a clear conflict of interest in favour of commercial goals which is inappropriate for a Heritage and Culture initiative' (Mayes 2010:6)

While much of the criticisms aimed at NZ On Air's music policies could be explained away by self interest, disappointed feelings of failed applicants, sectional interests, points of view and personal opinion, perhaps it's NZ On Air's past CEO Chris Prowse's comments that go to the heart of the problem behind the criticism:

The problem arose when NZ On Air decided to expand its role from the initial promotion of the broadcast of New Zealand music to also funding music content. It lacked the knowledge or expertise about making records to properly manage these schemes, nor was there the need for NZ On Air to fund the content to the extent that it did. This resulted in NZ On Air paying too much for some records.

Prowse 2011

Aware of the various criticisms being levelled at the music schemes, in 2008 NZ On Air began planning for two comprehensive reviews, with industry consultation, that were to result in fundamental changes.

THE CADDICK REPORTS

In 2009 NZ On Air commissioned a 'rigorous review' of the Phase Five international New Zealand music promotion programme. It was carried out by music industry consultant Chris Caddick, a former EMI executive. The international review set out to answer two key questions. First, should NZ On Air be involved in the international promotion of New Zealand music at all? And if so, is the so-called Phase Five plan the right thing for NZ On Air to be doing and how can it be improved?

The report highlighted a number of issues including the fact that Phase Five had been a 'very steep learning curve' based on a 'modest budget' and that in comparison with previous programmes was 'little understood', did not 'have universal acceptance' and lacked 'measurable goals'. However the answer to the first question was yes. Of the industry stakeholders interviewed by Caddick for the review a good majority (75%) agreed that NZ On Air should be involved in international New Zealand music funding and promotion.

Caddick argued that while NZ On Air's intentions were sound he suggested a 'sharpened focus' and a restructured programme to 'deliver measurable results'. He said that NZ On Air should be more independent of the Music Commission and concentrate on 'broadcast outcomes' within international jurisdictions. In this regard the review argues for a change in the geographical emphasis to concentrate on Australia to gain regular airplay there by promoting specific artists rather than Kiwi music generically. At an administrative level it also recommended that NZ On Air develop a clear mission statement and improve communication with the music industry to gain buy-in for that statement (Caddick 2009).

One aspect the Caddick review did not comment on was in what ways, if any, this aspect of the Phase Five plan fitted with NZ On Air's statutory objectives as set out in Sections 35-37 of the Broadcasting Act.

Immediately following the Phase Five review Caddick was asked to carry out a comprehensive review of NZ On Air's domestic music funding schemes. The reviewer conducted 100 interviews with a wide range of music industry personnel backed up by an online questionnaire answered by 655 people. The review began by stating:

To date the NZ On Air music programme has demonstrably achieved its stated aim of increasing airplay for New Zealand music on commercial radio. This has played a significant role in the re-establishment of New Zealand music in the consciousness of the general public. NZ On Air funding has ensured that New Zealanders continue to hear and see significant amounts of New Zealand music on a daily basis on radio and music television networks.

Caddick 2010:2

However it acknowledged many of the criticisms mentioned above and attempted to place them into context and summarise not only the criticisms levelled at NZ On Air but also the feeling behind them. It concluded that:

- The music industry tended to have a patchy knowledge of the various music schemes and initiatives. Few were aware of the range and rationale for all the schemes

- There was a general dislike for commercial radio in the greater music industry, yet an inherent understanding of its power and influence
- There was a clear wish to see assistance weighted towards artists at the beginning of their careers
- Although NZ On Air funding schemes have assumed greater importance as industry revenues have plummeted, it was not NZ On Air's job to be the default funder of recordings for the local music industry. Nor was it its job to prop up industry infrastructure
- Rather, NZ On Air should be a valuable partner to the industry, as it undertook its primary purpose of providing and promoting music programming content for broadcast media. This provided a key cultural contribution to New Zealand society
- At least as much value should be placed on its promotional programmes as its funding schemes: 'getting noticed' among the plethora of available music is harder than it has ever been. Unlike television funding, broadcast outcomes are not guaranteed at the point of funding approval
- There is a strong desire for the industry to be seen as acting responsibly with taxpayers' money
- There is some sense of wanting change for change's sake to the music programme, possibly related to the long tenure of the NZ Music Manager

The review then suggested that NZ On Air should consider changes both to its music funding and promotional schemes. In summary those recommendations included:

1. Creating a new funding scheme to promote diversity and encourage new artists by:
 - Pooling funding from the three existing funding schemes (albums, singles, videos) into one new track-based scheme
 - Establishing a selection process that caters to a broader spectrum of broadcast media
 - Providing greater assistance for newer artists compared to established artists within the scheme

- Limiting the amount of funding available to individual artists on an annual basis
 - Requiring a funding contribution and recoupment from repeat applicants
2. Initiating new promotional programmes and modifying existing ones to provide better connection with audiences by:
- Establishing a new media role and online/mobile promotional programme
 - Moving to digital delivery of tracks while retaining the option of a physical Kiwi Hit Disc
 - Using funding for longer form radio and television programming more efficiently
 - Setting goals for continuous improvement in broadcast percentages and improve monitoring of outcomes
 - Encouraging mainstream television networks to provide better exposure for New Zealand music
3. Promoting professionalism in the greater industry with both internal and external initiatives by:
- Improving application and audit procedures for funding
 - Improving communication with stakeholders
 - Strengthening interaction with other government agencies
 - Establishing a regular programme for future reviews
 - Encouraging industry action to quantify value of music to New Zealand

Alongside the Caddick report, NZ On Air also decided to work on improving the amount of New Zealand-composed classical music on RNZ Concert. In 2009 it partnered with SOUNZ, the centre for New Zealand music, and RNZ Concert to identify and digitally re-master selected recordings for re-broadcast. Many had only been heard once or twice previously. By 2011 the fruits of that project were becoming apparent. Over 140 significant chamber works had been relicensed and the percentage of New Zealand music on RNZ Concert began to rise. The funded music can also be streamed on the SOUNZ website.

THE FUTURE

As NZ On Air responds to the challenge of the latest review and moves into the third decade of responsibilities under Section 37d of the Broadcasting Act, it can take heart in one of the major findings of the review, that an overwhelming majority of respondents answered yes to the question 'Is it still important that government funding is used to get more New Zealand music on radio'. While the survey was based on casual online responses and thus not completely statistically accurate, it is one indication of broad acceptance of the fundamentals of the funding policies.

In its latest Statement of Intent (2011-14) NZ On Air, in response to the report, outlined the development of 'a whole new funding scheme called *Making Tracks*'.

Included in that scheme are the following commitments:

- To alongside commercial radio activities, make greater use of alternative platforms such as student radio, online and digital platforms, to broaden funding opportunities for new New Zealand music
- Weight funding support more towards emerging artists (rather than established artists)
- Use a wider range of music experts to help select projects for funding
- Place support for music from more established artists on a more business-like footing: for example, cost-sharing and income participation
- Provide a maximum of three grants per artist per year, all on a fully contestable basis
- Focus available funding on tracks (including music videos)
- Tighten eligibility criteria for funding to more realistically cater for demand

At the end of the first four funding rounds for *Making Tracks*, 129 grants had been made from 497 applications. The ratio of commercial to alternative music was 51:49, nearly an even split. The agency's target is 60:40.

However, while criticism of NZ On Air's music funding schemes has diminished it has not entirely ceased. Already *Making Tracks* has been challenged:

Any intervention into funding music content by NZ On Air should only arise if there is a particular type of music that has a "public good" aspect and that music is unlikely to be available to the public unless the Government funds it. Currently many high quality New Zealand records (across all the genres) are made each year without a drop of government funding. While there may be an argument for funding videos for broadcast, the situation for funding the recording of music is different. The quantity of non-funded music being recorded and played well exceeds NZ On Air's next year's Making Tracks target of 250 funded songs. So NZ On Air should reconsider whether it needs to spend \$2.5 million making tracks. The money would be better spent promoting the broadcast of all kinds of New Zealand music to a wide variety of listeners.

Prowse 2011:2

CHAPTER 15

REMOTE AREA COVERAGE

One of the less well-known activities of NZ On Air, in the first decade of its existence, was the funding of transmission to remote areas, specifically those which would not otherwise receive a commercially viable signal. This was a statutory requirement, laid down in the Broadcasting Act 1989, applying to both radio and television. This obligation was reinforced by a Ministerial Directive (Hunt 1989) that coverage be maintained at least at the level achieved by the BCNZ on 1 April 1988, before deregulation.

TELEVISION

TVNZ

The Ministerial Directive effectively meant that for TV One, coverage was required to reach 99.9% of the population, and for TV2 99.7%. For the first four years, 1990-1993, NZ On Air provided funding to TVNZ to maintain 700 transmission sites throughout the country, subsidising coverage to some 240,000 people, at a total cost over that period of around \$13 million.

The issue of which sites were non-commercial and hence requiring subsidy became yet another matter of contention between NZ On Air and TVNZ. In 1993 NZ On Air hired consultants to assess the commerciality of transmission sites on a site by site basis, concluding that the appropriate level of subsidy was significantly lower than previously estimated. NZ On Air accordingly reduced its transmission payment to TVNZ to \$638,000 for 1993, and paid nothing in 1994 pending further negotiations. Protracted negotiations were concluded in December 1995, with agreement on the figure of \$2m for 1996, for a total of some 250 TVNZ transmission sites.

By 1999 payments had been reduced to around \$1.5 million, considerably less than in the early years, but the then Chair, David Beatson, commented publicly that it remained a concern that funds were “tied up in such infrastructural support” when the pressures on programme funding were increasing (NZ On Air 1998/1999). His hope was that new technology would see this subsidy progressively eliminated.

This proved to be the case. By December 2001, both TVNZ channels were available by satellite, either via the Sky platform or TVNZ’s own satellite platform, although some expense was required from viewers to access these options. NZ On Air took the opportunity to produce a new transmission policy paper in November 2002. The agency then sought a Crown Law opinion on whether its statutory responsibility remained in the light of these developments. The Crown Law view was that there was no longer a statutory requirement to subsidise non-commercial coverage, because a commercial signal was available via satellite. NZ On Air terminated its transmission contract with TVNZ on 30 June 2003. The responsibility for any further subsidy to TVNZ was then transferred to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

TV3

Matters were more straightforward as far as TV3 were concerned. In 1993 TV3 had applied to NZ On Air for funding assistance to extend their coverage from 93% to 98% of the population. In 1994 NZ On Air agreed to funding of \$4.1 million, as a one-off payment for the capital costs of 61 new transmitters. This would enable coverage to reach another 195,000 potential viewers, and to extend to 96% of the population. The following year another \$765,000 was committed, to extend coverage to 27,000 viewers on the West Coast, with TV3 then reaching 97% of the population.

Unlike the situation with TVNZ, in the case of TV3 NZ On Air was funding the capital costs of an extension, but not the operating costs, which were to be met by TV3. There were no ongoing disputes with the broadcaster, as there were with TVNZ.

Special arrangements were put in place to deal with the last 3% who were unable to receive a TV3 signal. They were to be assisted by a joint funding scheme for small communities. NZ On Air offered a subsidy of \$100 per fee-paying household, to assist communities to purchase transmission equipment and to establish new transmission sites. Golden Bay was one community to benefit from this arrangement.

By 1996 a similar joint community scheme was in place for TVNZ, with South Taranaki being one community to take advantage of the arrangement. Both community schemes were terminated in 2001.

THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

Perhaps the most unusual subsidy from NZ On Air was funding the operating costs of a television service to the Chatham Islands. In 1991 the Chathams came to an agreement with TVNZ and NZ On Air for the establishment of a television service that involved the delivery of programmes through a mix of satellite (for time-sensitive programmes like the news) and VHS programme tapes airlifted in. NZ On Air agreed to pay the annual operating costs of around \$220,000.

Even this modest sum was subject to NZ On Air's relentless pressure to seek greater efficiencies. In 1999 a more cost-effective service was agreed, with delivery only by satellite. This reduced NZ On Air's subsidy to \$159,000, but programming hours also reduced, from 6.5 hours per day down to 4.2 hours.

The Chatham Islands service endured for just over 10 years, finally being terminated in February 2002.

RADIO

NZ On Air's extension of radio coverage was, on the one hand, driven by a Ministerial Directive and, on the other, by a self-determined policy to continue with the strategy of the former Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ).

The Broadcasting Minister's directive to NZ On Air (Hunt 1989) stated that it was

the general policy of the Government in relation to broadcasting...that every community of over 1,000 should have access to a primary signal for a community sound radio service.

While no Ministerial Directive was given for National Radio and Concert Programme coverage, NZ On Air decided to continue the established policy of the dismantled BCNZ which was to aim to provide a primary signal for both channels to any population base of 10,000 or more.

Responding to both the directive and the aims of the previous BCNZ, NZ On Air quickly developed a policy for the extension of radio coverage based on three priorities:

1. To ensure that every community with a population of 1,000 is served by a primary radio signal
2. To ensure that every community with a population of 10,000 is served by a primary National Radio and Concert Programme signal
3. To respond to initiatives from communities of less than 10,000 population who seek access to either the National Radio or Concert Programme networks.

(NZ On Air 1990)

The first budget allocated \$5 million for remote coverage. Just over \$3.5 million was required to maintain Television New Zealand's non-commercial coverage, leaving just under \$1.5 million for radio. In the early years of NZ On Air, Radio New Zealand (RNZ) was the dominant radio broadcaster, both commercial and non-commercial. Thus it was to RNZ that NZ On Air turned for advice, particularly in meeting priority one. RNZ offered to achieve the Ministerial Directive for less than \$1 million, with NZ On Air paying capital costs, labour costs and operating costs and RNZ providing the programmes. RNZ became the major provider of remote services through its hybrid and relay stations (RNZ 1990).

The first areas to be given signals under priority 1 coverage were Murchison, South Westland, inland South Canterbury, inland Wanganui, areas of the Hawkes Bay and Lakes Tarawera and Okareka in the Rotorua Lakes district.

Under priority 2 the National Radio signal was to be provided to Tokaroa/Putaruru, Rotorua, Wairarapa and South Canterbury and the Concert Programme was to reach audiences in Southland, Northland, Gisborne/Poverty Bay, Rotorua and the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

While no provision was immediately made for priority 3 stations, NZ On Air subsidised a number of existing RNZ stations already broadcasting in remote communities. These were a mix of 'hybrid' stations (some local programming, usually breakfast, and a programme feed from other RNZ stations at other times) and remote relays. Examples of the former included Taumarunui and Te Kuiti and of the latter Takaka and Te Anau.

Ironically, the first two stations in priority 1 to go to air were not RNZ stations. NZ On Air sought the views of the Murchison community in a public meeting and when asked which of the two Nelson radio stations they would like to hear in Murchison they opted for the private Radio Fifeshire over the local RNZ Nelson station. Likewise the preference in inland South Canterbury was for them to receive the Timaru private radio station signal Port FM. These were the first of a number of times where NZ On Air funded private radio broadcasters to provide social services (NZ On Air 1991/1992).

The first priority 2 station to go to air was the Concert Programme in Southland in December 1990 (NZ On Air 1990/1991).

By 1993 the first batch of signals slated for priority 1 and 2 were in service with a total of 20 new services funded and operational. By 1994 all of the areas identified in the 1990 policy document as requiring RNZ signals (National Radio and Concert FM) were provided with services using a total of 16 new transmitters all funded by NZ On Air. This meant that only 4% of New Zealand's population was unable to hear National Radio and just 10% were without a Concert Programme signal. In the same year community radio signals provided to communities of 1,000 increased to nine, most being relays of neighbouring private radio stations (RNZ provided relays in South Westland and Waimarino). To provide services to the 4% and 10% without National Radio and Concert Programme signals was considered too expensive. And it remained so until 1997 (see below).

As private radio expanded in the early 1990s the number of remote signals supported by NZ On Air diminished. In 1992 NZ On Air determined that it would not support a RNZ community signal in any area if a private radio provider was already providing one or was intending to do so (NZ On Air 1991/1992). In 1990 NZ On Air was supporting ten RNZ remote sites, by 1994 this had shrunk to just three. While RNZ was reluctant to let go of the subsidy and argued for its continuation, NZ On Air was staunch in the application of its policy of providing just one primary community signal to smaller communities. For example, RNZ requested continuing support for its Takaka relay of Radio Nelson's signal after Radio Fifeshire had launched an FM service to the Golden Bay area. Arguing that 'there is no place for public subsidy for one of the competing services' NZ On Air refused to continue funding the RNZ feed (NZ On Air, 1994: 2-3). In the same year NZ On Air supported Taranaki private radio station Energy FM in expanding its signal to coastal Taranaki. RNZ put pressure on NZ On Air by saying that it too would provide a service to the area and sought appropriate funding. This was turned down.

During 1994/5 NZ On Air researched ways in which it might be possible to deliver a primary signal to remaining small communities in a cost effective way. It chose the South Canterbury town of Twizel to trial a community-owned and operated National Radio relay using the services of national power line providers Transpower and Electricorp. The experiment encouraged NZ On Air to look at satellite options for delivering the signal that would consequently 'reach virtually every last nook and cranny' of New Zealand (NZ On Air 1995/1996).

It was at this stage that priority 3 was instigated. In 1997 under the title of the 'Tiny Towns' project NZ On Air funded the National Radio signal onto a satellite which provided universal coverage. The government put aside local frequencies for use with the satellite and each community engaging with the scheme was required to fund a low-powered satellite receiving dish and a small FM transmitter. NZ On Air would fund the annual costs of the satellite feed. A range of communities like Twizel, Te Anau, Te Kuiti and Wanaka canvassed their local communities for funds and were able to establish these facilities thus receiving access to a clean National Radio signal.

In 1999 RNZ took over responsibility for the administration of the 'Tiny Towns' scheme and also the costs related to the satellite transmission. The satellite service continued to spread with communities in Tekapo, and Wanaka funding their own FM satellite relays (NZ On Air 1999/2000). In 2000 the two RNZ services were made available on pay TV provider Sky's digital platform (NZ On Air 2001). This move provided universal access to individuals removing any reliance on the community group funding arrangements of the Tiny Towns project.

In 2000 NZ On Air commissioned a report into communities of less than 1000 which lacked a primary-strength community radio signal and determined to provide help to communities of 500 or more (Talbot 2000). The nature of that help was a once only capital subsidy to assist with establishing a service. While NZ On Air capped the allocation to no more than three applications a year, Karamea, with the approval of a grant of \$16,500, appears to be the only community that took advantage of the offer even although the population figure was further reduced in 2004 to 400+. In that year NZ On Air budgeted for \$900,000 to support radio transmission but 'as no applications were forthcoming, no commitment was made during the year' (NZ On Air 2005:12).

In the 2001 annual report NZ On Air listed its expenditure on radio transmission as just \$82,000. From that year onwards any support that NZ On Air continued to give to radio services was so miniscule that the figures no longer featured in the annual report.

NZ On Air's involvement in radio transmission expansion during its first 10 years played a major role in providing all New Zealanders with access to radio regardless of location. During the analogue years this required investment in a large number of small transmitters often located in remote sites. But one of the features of deregulation was the number of privately owned radio stations that began operating in small communities, previously considered uneconomic by larger broadcasters. This helped reduce NZ On Air's need to be involved in transmission. The other element that, in the end, made NZ On Air's task redundant was the arrival of digital services and the ability to offer a range of radio stations, particularly RNZ's programmes, to homes and individuals via satellite on the Sky TV digital platform.

CHAPTER 16

FUTURE CHALLENGES
AND CONCLUSIONS

RECORD OF SUCCESS

That NZ On Air has survived through the considerable changes of its 22 years is a tribute both to those who designed the model and to the Chairs, Board members and staff of the institution. Not only has it survived, but it has an undoubted record of success in fulfilling its functions as laid down in the 1989 Broadcasting Act. It has spent some two billion dollars in supporting New Zealand content, with barely a murmur of dissent or controversy. As former Board member Gaylene Preston says:

However the broadcasting climate changes NZ On Air is the only organisation in New Zealand that is there to take public money and turn it into local content. ...it demonstrates the brilliance of the structure that is NZ On Air. It is able to deliver local content of quality across the board wherever the broadcasting outcomes are. And I think that is going to be far more important in the next 10 years than it has been in the last 10 years .

Preston 2010

These comments reflect the reality that NZ On Air's mission is local content rather than any wider remit for public broadcasting, but there is some irony in the fact that the National Government that came to power in 2008 asserted that for New Zealand, public broadcasting on television is NZ On Air. As detailed in Chapter 6, this followed National's demolition of what remained of public broadcasting on television by scrapping the TVNZ Charter and refusing to fund TVNZ 6 and TVNZ 7.

So it would seem that NZ On Air's future has been rendered more secure by these developments. In response to criticism that the Government had killed off public broadcasting the Minister of Broadcasting replied that government policy was to fund programmes, not broadcasters, and that this fitted with their support for the NZ On Air model. NZ On Air could also be said to have scored a strategic victory in the astute way it handled the Platinum Fund. In allocating funding for a range of high-profile "quality" programmes, it demonstrated clearly that its stewardship of the fund was far more effective than TVNZ's misuse of its Charter funding. It would be reasonable to conclude that political threats to NZ On Air's existence are unlikely in the immediate future.

Although the contestable funding model for television has been a major component of this report, the range of NZ On Air's activities should not be forgotten. What is important is that NZ On Air deploys different models for different scenarios – Radio New Zealand is bulk-funded and access and community radio have their own model, as does music funding. The common factor is the disbursement of public money with rules and criteria, transparency and accountability. It should be noted that NZ On Air has been able to shed several activities that were hardly core business, such as remote area coverage and television archives. For the most part this concluding chapter will focus on issues around the contestable model for television.

IN THRALL TO THE NETWORKS?

From the preceding chapters it is evident that the NZ On Air contestable model works best when there is some harmony between broadcaster and funder objectives and when NZ On Air can actively partner with a broadcaster to push an initiative. Notwithstanding the failure of the TVNZ Charter, it did at least impose some programming requirements on the broadcaster which to a considerable extent overlapped with NZ On Air's objectives. Without the Charter and in an increasingly commercial climate, it is likely that NZ On Air will find it harder to push for some of the programming it wishes to see.

In this climate there is also likely to be further argument as to whether NZ On Air, in funding drama and documentary in prime time, is effectively subsidising commercial programming. Some see a triangular power relationship – NZ On Air, broadcasters and producers – in which the power has moved substantially in favour of the broadcasters, even to the extent that NZ On Air could be said to be in thrall to the networks. The broadcasters have always had the ultimate power as gatekeepers, but the issue is how they choose to exercise this power and to what extent they are prepared to partner with NZ On Air or at least negotiate.

An indication of a hardening of broadcaster position can be seen in the Statement of Intent from TVNZ, 2012 to 2014:

Notwithstanding the inherent uncertainty of any contestable funding scheme, there remains the risk of potential misalignment between the programming objectives of NZ On Air with the commercial objectives of TVNZ. This could result in the inability of TVNZ to attract NZ On Air funding for commercially attractive local programming. To mitigate this risk, we will engage NZ On Air to align objectives, agree aims for commercially attractive local programming and address potential revisions to funding criteria.

TVNZ 2012

This reflects the wholly commercial focus of TVNZ since the loss of the Charter and implies that it is NZ On Air's role to play handmaiden to TVNZ's need for "commercially attractive local programming". It will certainly be a challenge for NZ On Air to manage the sort of dialogue proposed, with its heavy threat of "potential revisions to funding criteria".

It might be argued that NZ On Air has already moved too far in its adjustment to commercial realities. As detailed in Chapter 9, producer Julie Christie believes that previously unfunded sub-genres such as popular factual have been funded in recent years because NZ On Air have realised that such programmes would not be made by the broadcasters and that their existence depends on support from NZ On Air. Such changes create hard choices in allocating limited funds, and it might be questioned if such programmes are essential to NZ On Air's remit.

The focus on ratings will intensify the challenges. The broadcasters have always been concerned with ratings, as the currency by which they sell audiences to advertisers. But they have the choice to either play very safe and conservative or to take risks, as with innovative programming where the ratings may be unpredictable or slow to build. Some producers see the broadcasters as increasingly risk-averse, to the detriment of creative programming. As Dave Gibson, head of one of New Zealand's most successful production companies, saw the situation in 2011:

Everything has to rate, ratings have become important across the board, all the drama needs to rate....I don't think you could get The Insider's Guide up now.

Gibson 2011

This is a reference to *The Insider's Guide to Happiness*, which although it performed well in the ratings and received critical acclaim, was hardly mainstream drama and hence a more risky proposition for the broadcaster. It would surely be a matter for concern if such programmes could not gain broadcaster support. Are not such programmes at the heart of NZ On Air's remit?

It may be thought that NZ On Air has followed the broadcaster line and itself become more risk-averse. What can be said is that the funder has become more concerned with ratings, to the point where all funding applications ask for a projected rating for the proposed programme.

It might be asked whether it matters if NZ On Air is persuaded to fund programmes of a commercial nature. Such programmes are local content after all, which is what NZ On Air is supposed to be promoting. Should we be concerned that more and more funded programmes are at the popular end of the spectrum, which again could be seen as a positive?

One response is that the more NZ On Air funds programmes that are commercially attractive enough for the broadcasters to make themselves without subsidy, the less funding is available for those programmes that are not so commercially attractive and therefore require subsidy. So a fine balance must be struck, with NZ On Air continuing to use its powers of persuasion against the rampant commercialism of the broadcasters. The chapters on drama and comedy and documentary provide an effective reminder of why these crucial genres continue to be "threatened."

THE NON-COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMES

These are the programme genres that have little or no commercial value to the broadcasters – children's, special interest and the arts. Their fate must be considered uncertain, yet these are the programmes NZ On Air is required to fund under the Broadcasting Act. The broadcasters have agreed to screen many of these programmes on commercial-free Sunday mornings, but this may no longer fit with how they wish to use their schedules or to brand their channels. There is nothing to stop a broadcaster saying "we will screen fewer children's programmes or perhaps none at all." Similarly with special interest or arts programmes, which could face a harder and harder battle to find a place in the broadcasters' schedules. This situation could be made immeasurably more difficult if Sunday mornings were to lose their non-commercial status. The broadcasters have been arguing for this change (Beatson 2012).

The fate of the non-commercial programmes further highlights the issue of the broadcasters as gatekeepers in an unregulated environment, seen by some as a fundamental weakness of the model:

The absolute all time weakness of NZ On Air is unless you have some kind of mechanism at the broadcaster end the system just doesn't work. You desperately need a Charter or quotas or a broadcaster that has a genuine public service mandate. Unless you have something at the broadcaster end the funder can have as much money as you like but it won't be able to prevent market failure... That is to say there are certain kinds of broadcasting outputs that a society needs. A healthy self-respecting, well-functioning society needs certain kinds of broadcasting products, and there is market failure.

Horrocks 2010

Programmes for minorities, special interests and the arts must be considered central to the "certain kinds of broadcasting products" that Horrocks is referring to. These are programmes that commercial broadcasters will not normally screen of their own volition. But they are an essential element of NZ On Air's remit.

THE AUDIENCE

The Broadcasting Act requires NZ On Air to consider the "potential size of the audience likely to benefit" from the programmes it may fund. This has led NZ On Air to favour programmes to be screened on the major free-to-air channels and to ration proposals from channels with small audiences. For many years it meant that proposals from the struggling regional television broadcasters were turned away, until in 2005 a modest amount of new money – less than \$1m – was forthcoming from the Labour-led Government specifically for the regional stations.

NZ On Air's policy has also meant, since 2008, the creation of a hierarchy within the free-to-air channels, based on audience share. Tier 1 is TV One, TV2 and TV3, tier 2 is Prime, Maori TV and FOUR, and tier 3 the regional, specialist and pay channels. As some programming that NZ On Air would like to support becomes harder to place on the tier 1 channels, so more have found a home on the tier 2 channels, a notable example being the seven-part documentary series celebrating 50 years of television in

New Zealand, which was turned down by TVNZ but found a warm welcome on Prime. Increasing numbers of documentaries have also been funded for Maori TV. These developments can be seen as NZ On Air becoming more flexible in the face of commercial realities:

A constant issue we have is if we have programming that's very dear to our statutory heart that we can't get up on TV One or TV2 or TV3 and that we would like to support for Prime or Maori, then obviously their audience levels remain of concern. But that's not an excuse to do nothing. Sometimes just getting the stuff made helps.

Wrightson 2010

But the issues within the free-to-air sector seem less significant once the question of pay TV is introduced. While there is nothing in the Broadcasting Act to stop NZ On Air funding programmes for pay channels, it has remained their policy not to do so, largely on the grounds that audience numbers on individual pay channels are much smaller than even the tier 2 free-to-air channels. But as fragmentation sees the audiences for the free-to-air channels decline, often to the benefit of the pay sector, it must be asked how long NZ On Air will be able to resist proposals from pay channels.

The question is particularly relevant to children's programmes, where Sky's pay channels for children have a loyal and growing audience. Arguably, as discussed in Ruth Zanker's chapter on the children's genre, if NZ On Air is intent on following the audience, it should consider applications from such channels. The problem has always been the view that public money should be used in ways that are accessible to all, whereas pay TV necessarily excludes around half the audience, as of 2011. Again, NZ On Air may find it expedient to be flexible in the future.

There is something of a precedent here, in that the specialist children's pay channel KidZone 24, started in 2011 and provided by TVNZ to Sky, contains much repeat content already paid for from public funding (see above p 90). The Heartland channel on Sky is in a similar situation. So the principle of publicly-supported content ending up behind the pay wall is already established, and NZ On Air may find itself facing potentially contentious decisions on proposals for new programmes for children's pay channels.

Jane Wrightson acknowledged that NZ On Air's policy as of 2011 may be subject to review:

While TV2 and FOUR remain willing to commission a range of children's programmes – to date we are still over-subscribed – we are unlikely to consider a pay channel. If we lose the interest of a major free-to-air channel, we would have to review our policy.

Wrightson 2011

QUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION

Some of those interviewed for this report have pointed out that NZ On Air must make a difference, otherwise there is no point in having the institution. One way of assessing the difference is to examine NZ On Air's stance in respect of quality, diversity and innovation, words that can be found frequently in the institution's mission statements and reports.

The key to NZ On Air's achievement of these objectives has been its proactive approach. The NZ On Air model is at its best when the agency decides it needs a certain type of programme, sets aside an amount of funding and then puts out a request for proposals. This should encourage competitive ideas from producers, or between broadcasters, although some cases are managed in partnership with a broadcaster who supports the original idea.

This is deploying the contestable model effectively. It has worked well through the years, with examples including a daily soap, one-off dramas, pre-school programming, children's drama, and special interest programmes to reflect New Zealand's increasing ethnic diversity.

Indeed considerable efforts have been made, notably in later years, to ensure that the diversity within the population is reflected in diversity of programming. Programmes like *Minority Voice*, *NZ Stories*, and *Neighbourhood* (due to screen in 2012) aim to feature New Zealanders rarely seen on screen, and to give the audience a greater understanding of the country's diverse communities. It should be noted that the above programmes all screen on TV One on Sunday mornings, although arguably they deserve a wider audience. It could be seen as a weakness of the model that NZ On Air cannot achieve better scheduling slots for such programmes.

The management of the Platinum Fund is perhaps the best example of NZ On Air's success in stimulating the creation of distinctive programming, to which that indefinable label "quality" might be applied. Again using the request for proposals process, NZ On Air has supported an impressive slate of programmes, ranging from high-end documentaries and docu-dramas to one-off dramas and competing current affairs programmes of the more serious kind. Most programmes are intended to be screened in prime time, with several going to Prime or Maori TV. NZ On Air has used the fund strategically to support programmes generally of a different order to those funded through its normal contestable fund, effectively exploiting the strengths of the model.

In terms of making a difference, it is worth pointing out that two of the past Chairs of NZ On Air – both distinguished public servants – have expressed a sense of disillusion from their experiences. The first Chair, Merv Norrish (1989-1995), said that the longer he was there, the more disillusioned he became. It seemed to him that the standard of television kept dropping no matter what NZ On Air did (Norrish 2010). No doubt much of his despair can be attributed to the tensions with TVNZ in the early years, as described in Chapter 3. But his concern with the commercial behaviour of the public broadcaster is a theme that runs through the whole history of the period.

The other Chair in this situation was Don Hunn (2002-2006), who was Chair during much of the Labour years when NZ On Air feared for its very existence. He said he found his four years totally unsatisfactory largely because he couldn't get from the Minister (Steve Maharey) key decisions on the future of NZ On Air (Hunn 2010). He was referring to the Government's review of broadcasting under the Programme of Action that was ongoing when Labour lost the election in 2008 (see Chapter 5). He was also "furious" about lack of consultation over both the TVNZ Charter and the Government's digitisation plans.

The reflections of these two significant figures in the history of NZ On Air provide a reminder that the institution's undoubted record of success has not been achieved without strife and personal cost. They also suggest that public statements and glossy reports, however positive, may mask swirling arguments behind closed doors.

FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

NZ On Air has always had to ration its funds carefully, but in recent years the demands on what has effectively become a static fund have exposed significant pressure points. RNZ, held to a freeze on its income since 2010, is one clear example. The wider question is whether NZ On Air has sufficient money to continue to fulfil its various remits adequately. This report's chapters on drama and comedy, and children's programmes in particular, provide a detailed analysis of how increasingly difficult choices are having to be made between various competing demands within these genres. Often the desire to fund new innovative or experimental programming has to be sacrificed to the need to satisfy the demands of ongoing series or strands. The evident conclusion is that in most years only parts of NZ On Air's various remits can be met, and that the total remit can only be said to have been fulfilled over a longer period of time.

At a time when all aspects of public spending are under close scrutiny, attempting to plead a special case for broadcasting would no doubt fall upon deaf ears. But a serious case can be made that NZ On Air is under-funded to achieve what its full remit demands. Consideration should also be given to ideas for additional funding, such as the levy on pay channels mooted by Trisha Dunleavy in her chapter on drama and comedy.

THE DIGITAL FUTURE

Perhaps the most important question NZ On Air must try to answer is how to reach its desired audiences in the fragmented world encompassed in the phrase "the digital future". It is the question alluded to in the reference by Gaylene Preston to the next ten years in the quote at the head of this chapter. The key unknown is the impact of the plan for ultra-fast broadband connecting a majority of households. Will this finally achieve the much-heralded me-channel universe where viewers no longer watch a traditional television schedule, but pick and choose from a variety of offerings, delivered over the internet, to assemble their own menu? What might this mean for a funding agency whose primary activity has been supporting content for traditional free-to-air broadcasters?

Arguably NZ On Air has made sensible policy decisions in its several, limited, forays into the digital world. NZ On Screen is an undoubted success which will only compound as more content is added. From its digital fund NZ On Air has supported multi-media projects, with the most successful being in partnership with a broadcaster. NZ On Air's experience is that stand-alone online projects may be innovative and creative but they lack visibility and profile. In the future it seems likely that the link with a broadcaster, or at least a major online platform will remain an essential element.

But this link with a broadcaster may not be required in all of NZ On Air's activities. Indeed responding to the challenges of the digital world may require a difference of approach between the minority and the mainstream programmes. Video on demand can be regarded as the simplest form of Internet Protocol Television (IPTV). This may offer the most effective means for minority or special interest programmes to reach their intended audiences in the future. It could meet the problem raised above of broadcasters being less inclined to broadcast such programmes, or the possibility of Sunday morning losing its non-commercial status.

Although many of these programmes can be accessed online, through TVNZ On Demand, this is a limited catch-up service, rather than a full archive, and dependent on the broadcaster as commissioner. There is an opportunity here for NZ On Air to create its own specialist channel, from which the minority audiences could make their selection at their leisure, and which could include sophisticated interactive elements. This could be seen as NZ On Air leading its various specialist audiences, without the necessity of broadcaster involvement. It would give NZ On Air more power, in being able to commission programmes not subject to the broadcaster gatekeeper, and it could mean greater choice for audiences.

To reach the mainstream or populist audience, the challenge is different. Mainstream audiences on free-to-air channels worldwide are declining in the face of viewers simply having more choices, whether from sources on the internet or finding more appealing content on pay channels. If mainstream audiences are drifting to pay channels, then NZ On Air may have little option but to follow the audience, as suggested above. The NZ On Air model requires delivery to the mass audience – if Sky channels like SoHo are seen

to be delivering significant audiences for drama in the future, NZ On Air would have to take seriously funding applications from such a channel. NZ On Air would simply be expanding the arena within which it operates, while recognising it is moving to smaller and smaller audiences.

All the indications are that the free-to-air channels will continue to deliver the largest audiences for some years to come. The NZ On Air model, so dependent for the most part on its relationship with the free-to-air channels, can survive and even prosper as long as this situation endures. The ultimate question is what happens if audiences fragment to the point where there is no longer a core mass audience.

One response is to follow the largest audiences wherever they may be, even though they may be much smaller than those of 2011. Alternatively there may be a series of niche audiences for particular genres, such as drama, documentaries or the arts, such that NZ On Air could re-interpret its audience requirement. The question must be whether NZ On Air can be said to be fulfilling its remit adequately if it is delivering for the most part to niche audiences.

But should not NZ On Air also exploit the potential of modern digital technology? Perhaps it could adopt the principle espoused by TVNZ of “inspiring on every screen”, meaning that it should aim to disperse its programmes across all available platforms. Should not all programmes funded by NZ On Air be available on demand online, as soon after broadcast as can be negotiated?

This would provide audiences with a greatly improved service compared to the situation that exists in 2011, where some NZ On Air programmes are available online, but they are spread around various sources and subject to disappearance at any time. There would be much benefit in a one-stop, easily accessible, comprehensive site to serve the New Zealand audience.

This might be done through an expanded NZ On Screen, or it may be thought preferable to create a separate site under the banner NZ On Air On Demand. This would offer opportunities for branding and marketing. If cost is an issue, solutions may lie either in some form of advertising, or in a system of micropayments. Rights issues should be dealt with at the time of funding.

NZ On Air should also consider the creation of applications to allow funded content to be available to mobile devices – smartphones, i-Pads and the like. In these ways NZ On Air could expand its reach as its traditional audiences become more niche. Ruth Zanker’s chapter on the children’s genre provides an important analysis of how broadcasting strands are morphing into local multi-media spaces, a trend that can only intensify. RNZ has also demonstrated the effectiveness of a sophisticated online offering.

Much may depend on how well the free-to-air model holds up, particularly its advertising-driven business model. It is tempting to conclude that the NZ On Air model was designed for a free-to-air environment and is inextricably linked to that environment. The corollary is that if the free-to-air model dies or is transformed beyond recognition, then the NZ On Air model would have to undergo radical change and move into a new era. It would not be enough to rest on the laurels of the first twenty two years.

CONCLUSION

In coming to any overall evaluation of NZ On Air, there must be two questions to consider. The first is how effective is the NZ On Air model, and the second is how well has NZ On Air fulfilled its remit.

On the issue of the remit, it is clear from the chapters describing NZ On Air’s various activities that for the most part the institution has found ways to achieve its goals and thus its remit. There have been mistakes and changes in policy from time to time – music is a good example – but these have been relatively minor. There has never been enough money to pursue all goals at the same time, but arguably NZ On Air has been judicious in its various balancing acts.

The model is unique – no other country has such a system. The model itself has strengths and weaknesses, but the key issue is how it has meshed with our wider media ecology.

New Zealand has always had an unusual mediascape. Its television public broadcaster was commercial from the start and by 2011 was a public broadcaster in name only. Listeners and viewers are at the mercy of fierce commercial rivalries between a small number of media owners, mostly based abroad. With notions of public broadcasting weak or non-existent (with the notable exception of RNZ), NZ On Air is virtually alone as an institution in its support for a variety of non-commercial or semi-commercial activities. While this study suggests that it has had an admirable record of success by any yardstick, the reality is that there continues to be market failure, there are gaps in the range and diversity of programmes and NZ On Air will always believe it could do more.

But it would be unreasonable to seek to attribute the responsibility for these shortcomings to NZ On Air. Any such institution has to function within its surrounding mediascape. The failings of our system do not centre round the failings of NZ On Air. NZ On Air has been assiduous in doing what it can to redress the weaknesses in our system, notably the imbalance between commercial imperatives and any sense of public broadcasting. It is an extraordinary, enduring, success story, in the face of the challenges arising from the ecology around it. New Zealand's media problems lie outside NZ On Air, in the structure into which it was created 22 years ago, and the way that structure has developed since.

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20 YEARS OF NZ ON AIR

THIS YEAR NZ ON AIR TURNED TWENTY.

Creating a wide-ranging, independent broadcast funding agency in 1989 was a bold move, unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

Over two decades NZ On Air's unwavering focus on serving audiences hungry for local content has helped a multitude of New Zealand stories and songs grow and flourish on the airwaves.

It's a great success story.



AEIOU (Akona Te Reo) 1991
Moana and the Moahunters



Country Calendar 1991



Shortland Street 1992



Eric the Goldfish

1989-1990

NZ On Air was created to add contestable broadcast opportunities

The Broadcasting Fee had been in place since the late 1920s, used to fund state-owned radio and television

Around 75% of households pay their Broadcasting Fee

1999-2000

The most popular NZ On Air-funded TV programme is *The Irish Connection*. Millennium documentary series *Our People, Our Century* also features in the top ten

NZ On Air's new Māori programming strategy, *Te Rautaki Māori*, plans for better screening times for mainstream Māori programmes

New Zealand music tops 10% on commercial radio, more than five times more than five years before

Extra government funding of \$2 million is announced for NZ On Air's New Zealand music work: "Phase Four" is created

1990-1991

The most-watched NZ On Air-funded TV show is *Low Pryme; Welcome To My World*

NZ On Air funds drama series *Shark In The Park* and *Marlin Bay*

Eleven new NZ On Air-funded Maori radio stations go to air, joining the six already broadcasting

NZ On Air-funded radio coverage extensions mean that Southland gets Concert FM and Murchison gets its first decent local radio signal

Moana & The Moahunters' *AEIOU* is the first NZ On Air-funded music video

NZ On Air establishes a funding partnership with the six student radio stations

NZ On Air funds the relocation of the Radio New Zealand Sound Archive from above a petrol station in Timaru to safer, better premises in Christchurch

First *Local Content Report* published, measuring amount of TV local programmes: 2,804 hours



Bread And Roses 1994

1991-1992

NZ On Air funds a record 187 hours of television drama in one year

Two groundbreaking NZ On Air-funded television series debut – *Shortland Street* on TV2 and New Zealand's first home-grown show for pre-schoolers *You & Me* on TV3

NZ On Air funds new access radio stations in Nelson, Invercargill and brings in Hamilton, expanding the access radio community to eight

Six new Māori radio stations go to air

Funded subtitled programmes for hearingimpaired viewers rise to from 5 hours to 30 hours per week



Nga Puna 1994

1992-1993

Local content across TV One, Channel 2 and TV3 hits 30%, an increase of 42% over the year before

The first Pacific Island radio station, Radio 531PI, is funded NZ On Air's radio coverage extensions

increase National Radio coverage to 96% and Concert FM coverage to 90%

"*They can't play it if they don't have it*": the first Kiwi Hit Disc music compilations sent to every radio station in the country

Eric the Goldfish helps NZ On Air increase the number of Broadcasting Fee payers to 86% of New Zealanders



The Caffeine Comedy Hour 1995

2000-2001

The Government publishes a draft charter for TVNZ, restructures Radio New Zealand as a Crown-owned Company and reviews its charter, and announces funding for a new Māori television service and a national Pacific Island radio network

Pioneer House is the most popular NZ On Air-funded TV show

NZ On Air commissions two new long-run television drama series, *Mercy Peak* for TV One and *The Strip* for TV3

The Government establishes the NZ Music Industry Commission

2001-2002

NZ On Air marks 10,000 hours of funded television programmes

Our Oldest Soldier is the most-watched NZ On Air-funded TV programme

bro'Town is the first primetime animated series funded by NZ On Air

Sitcom *Spin Doctors* funded

NZ On Air-funded programmes account for 90% of the TV Awards finalists, with awards going to *Staunch*, *Being Eve* and *Captain's Log*

The *NZ Music Code* created: commercial radio stations pledge to increase New Zealand music content to 20% over five years

2002-2003

More Māori programming landmarks: funded drama anthology series *Makatu* screens on TV3 and *Ngā Reo* documentaries screens on TV One

First series of satire *Eating Media Lunch* funded

The Government allocates funding directly to TVNZ for the new charter

The four-year pilot Pacific Island radio network *Niu FM* is launched

New Zealand music content on commercial radio reaches 15% at the end of the 2002 calendar year, 2% ahead of the Code target

C4 created by CanWest as a free to air music television channel

1993-1994

Funded miniseries *Bread & Roses* plays on TV One to 500,000 people per episode

22 Māori radio stations are now funded and on air across the country, up from six in 1989. More than 70% of Māori can now tune into a Māori radio station

NZ On Air funds special programmes for commercial radio audiences including historical series, *The New Zealand Chronicles*, a children's radio series called *The Quest* and *The Rampage Radio Show* for teens

1994-1995

Funded Māori dramas *Nga Puna* screen on TV One – a milestone for Maori drama on mainstream television

Letter To Blanche is wildly successful TV comedy, attracting audiences of about 550,000 a week

Four In Ten funded after significant community consultation, the first weekly TV series for people with disabilities

Government creates Te Māngai Pāho, with funding allocated through NZ On Air, to fund Māori radio and television

Access radio comes to Hawke's Bay with the establishment of Radio Kidnappers

NZ On Air-funded Samoan Capital Radio completes its first year

NZ On Air-funded radio comedy series, *The Caffeine Comedy Hour*, playing on 37 radio stations, wins award for Best Daily or Weekly Series at Mobil Radio Awards

1995-1996

NZ On Air's foundation funding for *Shortland Street* ends

The most-watched NZ On Air-funded television show is *The Billy T James Special*

Once Were Warriors, part-funded by NZ On Air, has its television premiere

The Topp Twins comedy series funded

Radio New Zealand becomes a solely noncommercial entity with a charter.

Kapiti's Coast Access Radio funded, taking the number of access stations to ten

The first *Kiwi Gold Disc* is delivered to radio – 98 Kiwi classic hits 1965-1990

The first *Indie Hit Disc* is launched, making genuinely diverse NZ Music available for airplay



Skitz 1995



Backchit 1997



The New Zealand Wars 1998

2003-2004

Māori Television launches in March 2004

The jewel in the year's television drama crown is funded series *Insider's Guide To Happiness*

The most-watched NZ On Air-funded television programme is the documentary *Dare To Be Free*

A record three children's drama series funded

NZ Idol launches

New Zealand music content on commercial radio reaches 17.75%

The Government-convened Music Industry Export Development Group publishes *Creating Heat*, a report on increasing opportunities for New Zealand music internationally

2004-2005

Outrageous Fortune funded to screen on TV3

Two new funded children's radio series go to air – *Small World* on Solid Gold and *That's The Story* on Classic Hits

New Zealand music content on commercial radio reaches 18.57%

CanWest re-brands *Channel Z* as *Kiwi FM*, an all-NZ music network

Shihad launches NZ Music Month 2005 with a free concert in Aotea Square in Auckland. The now-iconic *NZ Music Month* tee shirt goes on sale to the public for the first time

The Government announces funding for international music market development that includes NZ On Air's *Phase Five* plan

2005-2006

The Government announces plans to launch digital television initiative *Freeview*

The most popular NZ On Air-funded TV programmes include the perennial *Country Calendar*, *Frontier Of Dreams*, and *bro'Town*

Part-funded feature *Whale Rider* also rates highly on air

The Radio New Zealand website offers streaming and audio-on-demand

The Government provides funding for regional television stations

The radio industry delivers on its *NZ Music Code* pledge a year ahead of schedule: New Zealand music on commercial radio tops 20% for the first time

1996-1997

The most-watched NZ On Air-funded TV show is talent quest Showcase, followed by sitcom *Letter To Blanchy*

Period drama *Greenstone* and detective thriller *Duggan* funded

NZ On Air launches "Tiny Towns" to help small and remote communities to get their own local National Radio relay. Twizel is the first "tiny town", followed by Te Anau, Te Kuiti, and Otematata

The first *Iwi Hit Disc* is launched, joining the *Kiwi Hit Disc*, the *Indie Hit Disc* and the *Kiwi Gold Disc* and adding Māori language and kaupapa music to the NZ On Air music resource

NZ On Air helps form the *Kiwi Music Action Group* to promote New Zealand music on commercial radio. *Kiwi MAG* sets up the first NZ Music Week (which will later become NZ Music Month)



Pioneer House 2001

1997-1998

The New Zealand Wars, along with the *Sir Edmund Hillary* documentary, *View From The Top*, included in the top ten most popular NZ On Air-funded TV programmes

Funded arts current affairs series *Backchât* launched

A new access radio station, *Manawatu Sounz*, goes to air in Palmerston North

NZ On Air launches "Double Digits" campaign to push for 10%-plus New Zealand music on commercial radio

The NZ Film Archive receives funding to provide television archiving services

95% of New Zealanders now paying their Broadcasting Fee – a higher compliance rate than for motor vehicle licensing



bro'Town 2002

1998-1999

NZ On Air is ten years old

The Government plans to abolish the Broadcasting Fee, replacing it with direct funding for NZ On Air and Te Māngai Pāho

NZ On Air publishes important study – *Local Content & Diversity: Television In Ten Countries*

A symposium on broadcasting policy, hosted by NZ On Air and the Institute of Policy Studies, features former Irish Arts Minister Michael D. Higgins

Country Calendar is the most-watched NZ On Air funded television show

NZ On Air funds ground-breaking series *PopStars*, forerunner of the international idol phenomenon



Outrageous Fortune 2005

2006-2007

NZ On Air marks 15,000 hours of funded television programmes

Outrageous Fortune goes to a third series, dominates the major categories at the *2007 Air New Zealand Screen Awards*, and features in the list of most popular NZ On Air-funded TV programmes

Funded comedy *The Jaquie Brown Diaries* creates strong audience feedback

My Story funded, the first New Zealand programme with a mobile phone viewing component

New terms of trade are agreed with television producers to stimulate offshore sales of NZ On Air-funded programmes

2007-2008

Television drama flourishes: *Outrageous Fortune* becomes New Zealand's longest running one-hour drama series, NZ On Air funds several TV One *Sunday Theatre* top-rating dramas, and three further prime time series are developed

Total local content hours on air now 11,600 hours

NZ On Air launches the *Digital Content Partnership Fund*, to provide funding support for online content

NZ On Screen wins a major Qantas Media Award in its first year

TVNZ's direct funding becomes the responsibility of NZ On Air

Sales of NZ On Air Phase Four-funded albums pass the one million mark

The 100th *Kiwi Hit Disc* is delivered to radio

NZ On Air launches a new New Zealand music website: www.kiwihits.co.nz

2008-2009

The Top 10 funded television programmes had some of our highest viewing numbers ever

Outrageous Fortune broke all local drama popularity records - and swept the 2008 Qantas awards

The new *Platinum Fund* will create even more options for high quality local television programmes

Television local content hours in 2008 reach the highest levels ever

Radio New Zealand National won the Station of the Year 2009 award

2009 Qantas Film and Television Award finalists and winners included programmes funded by NZ On Air in a record 24 of the 30 general categories

Untouchable Girls broke New Zealand box office records for documentaries

NZ On Air-backed songs dominated the radio airplay charts

APPENDIX:

INTERVIEWEES FOR THIS STUDY

MINISTERS OF BROADCASTING

Jonathan Hunt *1984-1987, 1988-1990*

Richard Prebble *1987-1988*

Maurice Williamson *1990-1999*

Marian Hobbs *1999-2002*

Steve Maharey *2002-2007*

CHAIRS OF THE BOARD OF NZ ON AIR

Merv Norrish *1988-1995*

David Beatson *1995-2002*

Don Hunn *2002-2007*

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF NZ ON AIR

Gay Charlotte *1989-1995*

Roger Horrocks *1989-2000*

Jim Stevenson *1991-1996*

Pamela Meekings-Stewart *1994-2000*

Gaylene Preston *2000-2006*

Judy Callingham *2002-2007*

MEMBERS OF THE STAFF OF NZ ON AIR

Ruth Harley, Executive Director *1988-1995*

Chris Prowse, Chief Executive *1995-1998*

Jo Tyndall, Chief Executive *1998-2007*

Jane Wrightson, Chief Executive *2007 to present*

Brendan Smyth, Radio and NZ Music Manager
1989 to present

Emily Loughnan, Television Programme Manager
1989-1993

Glenn Usmar, Television Manager *2007 to present*

Tainui Stephens, Te Kai Urungi *2000-2010*

INDUSTRY PRACTITIONERS

George Andrews, documentary producer

Gil Barker, former children's programmes
producer, TVNZ

John Barnett, Chief Executive, South Pacific Pictures

Julie Christie, Chief Executive, Eyeworks

John Craig, former General Manager,
Radio New Zealand

Dave Gibson, Producer, Gibson Group

Bettina Hollings, Managing Director, Imagination TV

Veronica McCarthy, documentary producer

Julian Munter, Chief Executive TVNZ *1986-1991*

Hugh Rennie, Chair BCNZ *1984-1988*, Chair of Steering
Committee on Restructuring of BCNZ *1988*

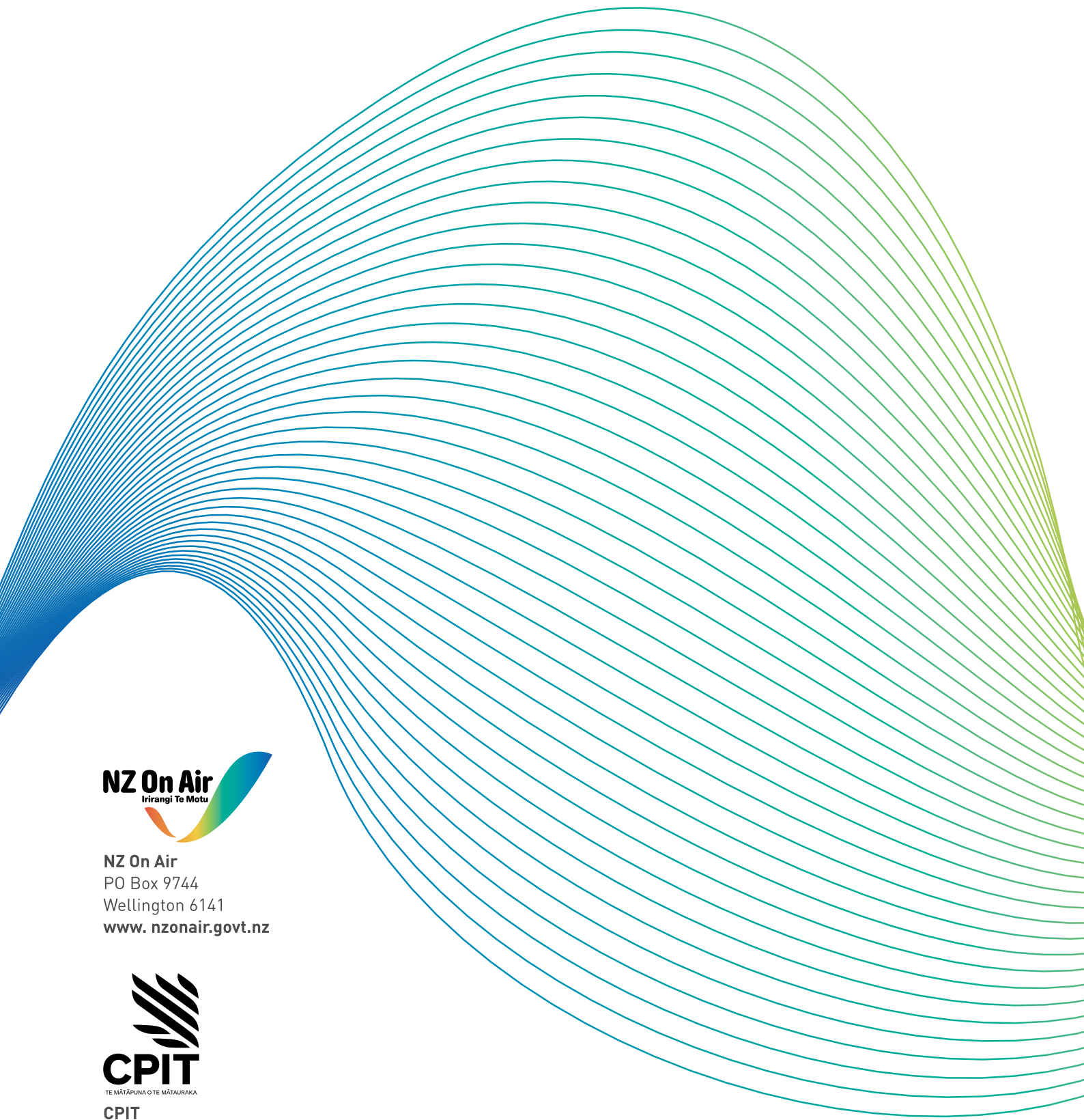
Robyn Scott-Vincent, Producer, Attitude Pictures

Rex Simpson, Executive Producer KTV

Geoff Steven, former commissioning editor
TV3 and TVNZ

Sue Woodfield, Head of Factual Production, TV3

Beverley Wakem, Chief Executive Radio New Zealand
1984-1991



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