

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED TO 5 AM, Wednesday 13 December 2023

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND MEDIA OWNERSHIP 2023 – JOURNALISM MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

The 2023 Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership report from the AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD) reveals the following significant events:

- TVNZ and RNZ merger process terminated.
- Privately owned Mediaworks abruptly closes radio newstalk station, TodayFM.
- The Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill provides a nationally inclusive statutory framework for negotiated agreements between news publishers and platform operators.
- The Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) ceases operation.

As of December 2022, Select Committee hearings on the Bill for the proposed TVNZ-RNZ merger, including the Charter, had been completed. However, on 8 February 2022, three weeks after Jacinda Ardern's resignation, the new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins ended a raft of public policy projects and initiatives, including the merger.

- “This finished the prospect of a large public media entity designed to counter the commercial power of private media and social media corporations”, says JMAD Co-Director Professor Wayne Hope.

Global platforms Alphabet/Google and Meta/Facebook continue to corner advertising revenue and repurpose news publisher content. At the same time, media outlets rely increasingly on these platforms to disseminate news content to audiences.

News publisher attempts to obtain compensation from social media corporations in different countries have sought a legislatively backed news bargaining code and/or voluntary negotiated settlements, both collectively and as individual agreements.

In May 2022, 28 members of the New Zealand News Publishers Association were pursuing payment from Meta/Facebook or Alphabet/Google. New Zealand Herald owner, NZME, decided to negotiate separate arrangements with each of the social media corporations.

In December 2022, Alphabet/Google announced signed payment agreements with 23 national publishers. By March 2023, 25 news publishers had made content payment deals with Google News Showcase.

Plans for legislatively mandated compensation took shape on 17 August 2023 with the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill, which would give the Broadcasting Standards Authority a statutory framework for overseeing a news bargaining code designed to facilitate negotiated agreements among news publishers and platform operators.

JMAD Co-Director Professor Wayne Hope says the effectiveness of the legislation is questionable. “Some compensatory payments may result, but the impact of the legislation may be reduced, as major platforms are already developing licensing agreements outside of a statutory framework.

“During the 2023 economic downturn, financially squeezed broadcasters, print and online publications confronted to varying degrees the economic power of platforms, streaming companies and financial media owners. Given discussion concerning the purpose of the PIJF in the first few weeks of the newly-formed National-led government it seems unlikely it will advance initiatives in support of public media and news journalism.”

About the report:

Several AUT researchers from the School of Communication Studies contributed to the 2023 JMAD report. It was edited by Professor Wayne Hope and coordinated by Haley Jones. Professor Hope also authored sections of the report. Other contributors were: Associate Professor Sarah Baker, Dr Peter Hoar, Dr Rufus McEwan and Dr Greg Treadwell. Outside of AUT, Dr Atakohu Middleton wrote on Māori media, and Saing Te wrote on Crown-funded and corporate media.

Professor Wayne Hope and Dr Greg Treadwell are available for interview.

Useful links:

[AUT's Journalism, Media and Democracy Research Centre](#)

Read more about the [Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill](#)

For any media enquiries, or to request a high-resolution image, please contact:

Nicola Igusa

Senior Faculty Communications Manager

Auckland University of Technology

M: +64 21 844 285

E: nicola.igusa@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is one of the world's best modern universities. Home to 28,000 students across three campuses, AUT has more than 60 research centres and institutes delivering leading research – from artificial intelligence to robotics, and ecology to public health. As a contemporary university, AUT is connected to an extraordinary range of organisations worldwide; sharing expertise and resources, collaborating on ground-breaking research, and connecting students with industry leaders and employers.