Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership 2025

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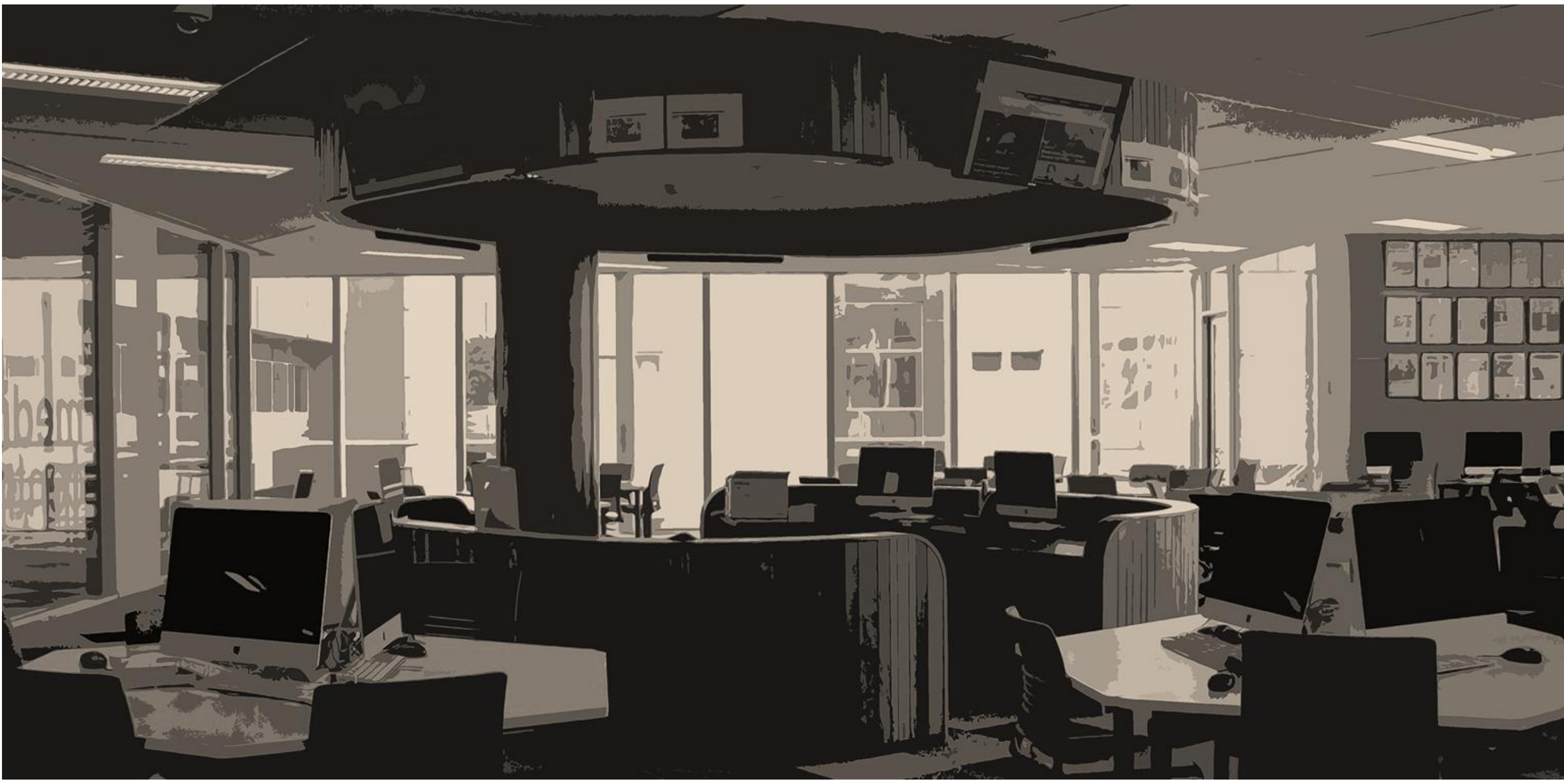
Media and Democracy (JMAD)



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AOTEAROA

About This Report

This report is part of JMAD's ongoing series on Aotearoa New Zealand media ownership. Since 2011, the AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD) has published reports that document and analyse developments within Aotearoa New Zealand media. These incorporate media ownership, market structures and key events during each year. The reports are freely available via the JMAD research centre: https://www.jmadresearch.com

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Introduction

Wayne Hope

By late November 2025 the world's top seven corporates were all tech related, an unprecedented development. The combined market capitalisation of NVIDIA, Apple, Alphabet/Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Broadcom and Meta/Facebook exceeded US$21.9 trillion. The equivalent figure for the top ten media corporates was a mere US$381.2 billion, down from US$399.44 billion in 2024. Clearly, ICT-Corporate wealth dwarfs that of media corporations. And, from this data an asymmetric relationship can be inferred—media corporates are subservient to big tech behemoths. During 2025 mega deals within and adjacent to the telecommunications sector were driven by the imperatives of consolidation, synergy and scale. Massive capital expenditure is required to incorporate AI within upgraded network infrastructures. To this end, the year has seen enormous partnership and funding deals throughout ICT sectors. Key players mentioned in this report include Oracle, NVIDIA, OpenAI and Amazon. Such developments mean that ICT sectors are beginning to shape media and news media ownership patterns. The Paramount-Skydance merger, confirmed in August 2025, is a case in point. Skydance is led by David Ellison, son of Oracle CEO Larry Ellison. The new amalgamated entity is integrating with Oracle's software. Crucially, the Ellisons indirectly control the destiny of the CBS network and CBS News from the Paramount stable. This exemplification of Trump-aligned, right-wing pressure—economically, politically and socially—mirrors United Kingdom developments. The Daily Mail's acquisition of Telegraph titles, confirmed in November, has created a huge right-wing bloc in the newspaper industry. This coincided with the departures of BBC Director Tim Davie and News Chief Deborah Turness after pressure exerted by Michael Prescott (a former Murdoch press editor) and Robbie Gibb (a former conservative government communications chief).

Analysing ICT, media and news media ownership patterns in Aotearoa New Zealand is the primary purpose of JMAD's 2025 report. Here, three new, inaugural chapters deserve special mention: Internet–media and telecom ownership (Paul Mountfort), streaming channels and services (Rachel Daniels) and Podcasts (Thomas Watts and Danielle Selman Julian). Overall, across the Aotearoa mediascape the following events and trends indicate the prevailing transnational dimension of ICT-media ownership and service/content provision.

- In March Canadian billionaire Jim Grenon buys 9.3 % of NZME's shares. By September his stake lifts to 17.9%.
- During 2025 Netflix, Disney and Amazon Prime provide the most-watched subscription video on demand (SVOD) content
- In June Sinead Boucher sells 50% of Stuff Digital—publisher of the stuff.co.nz news site —to market place portal Trade Me.
- From April to June Quadrant Private Capital, through outdoor media company QMS, takes full ownership of Mediaworks.
- During 2025 One NZ (formerly Vodafone NZ) expands its direct–to-mobile text messaging service powered by SpaceX/Starlink satellites.
- In August Sky announces the acquisition of Discovery *New* Zealand, owner of free–to-air channels Three and Three Now for NZ$1.

Counter to these developments, one potentially promising *national* trend stands out. Various public affairs podcasts are partly filling the gap left by previous closures of current affairs television programmes and long-form journalistic magazines.

1. Media-Communication Ownership in Global Context

Wayne Hope

Information and communication technologies generally, pervade various media and news media domains. Thus, global ownership structures incorporate online and traditional media services, core internet services, internet device usage and telecommunication infrastructures (copper, fibre optics, satellite, cloud). Major corporations stretched across these technologies control a range of media-entertainment content, e.g., news, film, streaming series, sports, music.

Largest media and tech corporations

Under the general rubric of media and press companies, the ten largest ranked according to market capitalisation, are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Ten largest media and press companies by market capitalisation

Rank	Corporation	Market Cap US$
1	Comcast	98.54 billion
2	Thomson Reuters	61.21 billion
3	Warner Bros/Discovery	59.47 billion
4	Naspers	48.94 billion
5	Fox Corp	27.43 billion
6	BCE	21.92 billion
7	Rogers Communication	21.25 billion
8	Paramount/Skydance	17.67 billion
9	News Corp	16.43 billion
10	New York Times	10.50 billion

Source: Adapted from "Largest media and press companies by market cap". Retrieved November 29, 2025. https://companiesmarketcap.com/usd/media-press/largest-media-and-press-companies-by-market-cap/

On a wealthier scale, ranking the world's largest companies by market capitalisation reveals a supervening layer of tech corporations. See Table 2

Table 2. Seven largest companies by market capitalisation

Rank	Corporation	Market Cap US$
1	NVIDIA	4.301 trillion
2	Apple	4.138 trillion
3	Alphabet/Google	3.864 trillion
4	Microsoft	3.657 trillion
5	Amazon	2.493 trillion
6	Broadcom	1.902 trillion
7	Meta platforms/Facebook	1.633 trillion

Source: Adapted from "Largest Companies by Marketcap". Retrieved November 29, 2025. https://companiesmarketcap.com/usd

As stated in the 2024 JMAD Media Ownership report, combined market capitalisation for the top ten media corporations was US$399.44 billion. For Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet/Google, Amazon and Meta/Facebook, the combined figure was US$12.2 trillion. NVIDIA, a hardware and software corporation involved in the development of AI tools, ranked second at US$3.437 trillion market capitalisation. Seventh ranked Saudi Aramco, a state-run oil conglomerate (US$ 1.71 market capitalisation) was the only non-tech corporation listed (all 2024 figures were retrieved on November 19). Then the report noted that "the capital strength and market power of tech corporations prevails over media corporations" (Hope et al., p. 9). During 2025 this trend intensified. For the first time all of the world's top seven companies were tech related. The new entrant, Broadcom is a US-based designer developer, manufacturer and global supplier of semiconductor and infrastructure software products, including AI tools. On 19 November 2024 the market capitalisation for Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Meta/Facebook and NVIDIA totalled US$15.63 trillion. The equivalent combined figure for 29 November 2025 was US$20.86 trillion. This US$5 trillion wealth increase for big-tech coincided with the growing centrality of AI-related applications, synergies and profit generation across multiple ICT sectors worldwide. NVIDIA's pre-eminence attests to the trend. Between 19 November 2024 and 29 November 2025 its market capitalisation value rose from US$3.437 trillion to US$4.301 trillion—a US$54 billion increase. Over the same 2024-2025 time period, *combined* market capitalisation for the leading ten media companies declined from US$399.44 billion to US$381.2 billion. Burgeoning big tech corporations thus preside over a commercially contracting media corporate sector. This further marginalises news media organisations and the journalism profession.

Mega deals across communication sectors

In March 2025 Alphabet/Google's announced acquisition of Israeli-based cybersecurity corporate Wiz exemplified the relentless expansion of big tech behemoths. The US$32 billion deal was Alphabet/Google's largest ever acquisition and the seventh biggest takeover of a private US firm on record (Sweney, 2025a; Egan, 2025). If regulators were to stymie the deal, Wiz would receive a US$3.2billion fee from Alphabet/Google. The latter's strategic objectives were to bolster cloud offerings, especially in cybersecurity, and to thereby advance their AI applications. Analysis of these matters must consider Alphabet Google's prior acquisitions of United Kingdom AI start-up Deep Mind for about ₤400 million in 2014 and the cybersecurity corporate Mandiant for US$5.4 billion in 2022 (Sweney, 2025a). The US Department of Justice cleared the Wiz acquisition in November 2025. Judgements from other regulators are expected to conclude in 2026 (Haranas, 2025).

During 2025 telecommunications deals reshaped the sector. The largest merger, announced on 31 July between Charter Communications and Cox communications was valued at US$34.5 billion. Described by one commentator as a "transformative event", the new entity would serve over 30 million customers across 41 states and become the nation's second largest broadband provider (Nolan, 2025b). An issue brief from the international Center for Law and Economics in September positioned the transaction as "a strategic adaptation" to a communications market "characterised by dynamic multiplatform competition from fixed wireless access, satellite broadband and streaming services" (Fruits et al., 2025). Subsequently, on 19 November, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) filed a petition with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) urging them to deny the merger on public-interest grounds. The CWA media release noted "Charter's history of resisting worker organising efforts" and declared that "the consolidation threatens job quality and worker rights across the combined entity's operations" (CWA, 2025b). One month previously, preceding FCC confirmation of the merger, Charter had laid off almost 1,200 employees, approximately one per cent of their 95,000 strong workforce (Varghese, 2025).

On 21 May 2025, AT&T announced a deal to acquire Lumen Technologies` consumer fibre operations for US$5.75 billion. The latter would then pay down US$4.8 billion in debt and improve cash flow. AT&T was expected to gain one million new fibre-to-the-home customers (Anderson, 2025a; Vinn, 2025). One week later CWA observed that AT&T's acquired consumer fibre networks were to be run by a new, autonomous subsidiary NetworkCo, which could then be partially sold to an unnamed private equity partner (CWA, 2025a). Correspondingly, also in May, Verizon—the world's second largest telecommunications corporate by revenue and the US's largest mobile network—acquired Frontier Communications, a US-centred telecommunications corporation with major fibre optic networks, cloud-based services and digital television holdings. The US$20-billion-dollar deal would enable Verizon to extend the nationwide reach of its fibre optic cables and expand its subscriber base. The FCC's approval came after Verizon promised to remove its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies (Nolan, 2025a; Leamey, 2025). However, on 10 November, Forbes magazine revealed that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) had stalled the acquisition, partly because Verizon's agreement to eliminate DEI programmes violated California State laws (Forbes, 2025). On 17 July 2025, SES—a corporate with approximately 90 geostationary satellites and 30 Medium Earth orbit satellites plus a major ground network—announced the FCC-approved acquisition of the International Telecommunications Satellite organisation (Intelsat). The latter was a communications corporate providing high-speed internet, television and radio services by satellite to governments, telecommunication networks, broadcasters and mass audiences. This US$3.1-billion deal was said to have created a "global multi-orbit connectivity powerhouse." The new financially enlarged entity would allow SES to "continuously strengthen its network and explore emerging growth markets including Internet of Things (IoT), direct-to-device communications, inter-satellite data relay, space situational awareness and quantum key distribution" (SES, 2025).

Stella Nolan from Telco magazine has posited that such megadeals are driven by the "pursuit of scale" in order "to meet the massive capital expenditure demands" associated with infrastructure-network upgrades. In this context, AI platforms were seen to "play an increasingly critical role in driving and executing mergers and acquisitions". They can automate "the analysis of vast contractual and financial datasets to highlight risks and compliance issues early" (Nolan, 2025b).

Beyond the telecommunications sector, major acquisitions integrated base technological components of AI infrastructure. Most notably, in late October a consortium entitled Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure Partnership (AIP), led by Asset Manager Blackrock, was (via its Global Infrastructure Partners fund - GIP) set to acquire Aligned Data Centres from Australian financial services group MacQuarrie for US$40 billion. Other consortium participants included NVIDIA, Microsoft, Cisco and Emirati sovereign tech fund

MGX. Aligned Data Centres operates over 50 such centres across the US, Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Columbia (NZ Herald, 2025b). CEO Andrew Schaap, who would continue in his role under the new entity, remarked that "with AIP, MGX and GIP's global reach, extensive resources and deep expertise across AI, energy and finance we are poised to scale faster, innovate further and redefine what's possible in sustainable data centre infrastructure" (Anderson, 2025b). To this end, non-acquisition partnership funding deals, listed by Forbes magazine on 1 December, included the following. On 10 September came the announcement that OpenAI had signed a contract with Oracle to purchase US$300-billion worth of computing power over the next five years. Twelve days later a partnership involving a US$100-billion investment from NVIDIA into OpenAI was made public. Earlier, on 23 May, Oracle had announced that it would purchase US$40-billion worth of NVIDIA's AI chips to power OpenAI's US data centre in Abilene Texas. On 3 November it was announced that OpenAI would use Amazon's cloud computing services over the next seven years. Amazon would provide Open AI with thousands of NVIDIA graphics processors. The entire deal was valued at US$38 billion (Roush, 2025). These, along with other such arrangements, have been characterised as a "trillion-dollar merry-go-round" (Money Control, 2025) and as a "tangled web of circular deals" masking "deep fragilities" (Orlowski, 2025).

Concentrations of media and news media ownership: Deals, trends, impacts

Megadeals across communication sectors blur the boundary between ICT and media corporations. Thus, the JMAD 2024 media ownership report recounted the announced July merger between Paramount Global (owner of multiple television properties, film archives and a streaming service) and Skydance media, a film and television production company founded by David Ellison, son of Oracle CEO Larry Ellison. This was expected to succeed a prior arrangement whereby Skydance would pay US$2.4 billion cash for National Amusements (the latter held a controlling stake in Paramount) (Hope et al., 2024). On 26 July 2025 news reports revealed that the US FCC had cleared the merger (by then valued at US$8 billion) on the proviso that Skydance would revoke their DEI workplace policies (C. Hayes, 2025). The new amalgamated entity is now in the process of integrating with Oracles' cloud infrastructure (Yahoo Finance 2025). Two weeks after the FCC decision, Paramount-Skydance laid off nearly 300 workers in the Hollywood area. As of 19 November, a further 197 losses had been announced. Business journalist Pat Maio from the *Los Angeles Daily News* reported that the merged entity hoped "to save $3 billion over the next two years and reduce Paramount's workforce by 15%" (Maio, 2025).

Approximately two months earlier, an investment consortium involving Oracle acquired a 65% stake in a US-based TikTok, partially separated from its original Chinese owner Byte Dance. A seven-member board of directors would be comprised of cyber security and national security experts. Other consortium investors were said to include Rupert Murdoch and Michael Dell, CEO of Dell Computers (Kerr & Robins-Early, 2025). These developments, alongside Oracle's centrality to the AI-related megadeals mentioned previously, point to the economic and political influence of Larry Ellison and family. In a 12 November *Guardian* article concerning "ultra-rich media owners," Robert Reich informed readers that "Ellison is a longtime Trump donor who also, according to court records, participated in a phone call to discuss how his 2020 defeat could be contested". He went on to say that before the Paramount-Skydance merger, incorporating CBS, "some top brass at CBS News and its flagship 60 Minutes resigned, citing concerns over the network's ability to maintain its editorial independence, and revealing pressure by Paramount to tamp down stories critical of Trump" (Reich, 2025). Also, preceding the merger, CBS announced it was cancelling Stephen Colbert's *Late Show*, ostensibly for financial reasons (Hirschfield, 2025).

In 2023 the *Who Owns the UK Media* report from the Media Reform Coalition at the Leverhulme Research Centre revealed an "endemic crisis of concentrated media ownership" that had "worsened" with "even fewer companies controlling larger shares of the media landscape" (Chivers, 2023). These and other findings were recounted in the 2024 *JMAD Media Ownership* report. This year a new *Who Owns UK Media* report declared that "since our last report in 2023, the largest media companies have cemented and expanded their dominant market positions" (Chivers, 2025). Following this report's publication on 22 November, DMG Media, Lord Rothermere's holding company for subsidiaries of the Daily Mail and General Trust, agreed to buy the Daily and Sunday Telegraph (plus associated titles) for ₤500 million pounds (Sweney, 2025c). Immediately prior, private equity group Redbird Capital had dropped its ₤500-million-pound bid for the titles. That initiative had been opposed by staff throughout the *Telegraph's* newsrooms. (Sweney, 2025b). For *Guardian* reporter Mark Sweney the eventual DMG takeover was "a move that [would] create a right-leaning publishing powerhouse" (Sweney, 2025b). Correspondingly, the departures of BBC Director General Tim Davie and News Chief Deborah Turness following criticisms of a *Panorama* documentary on the 6 January 2021 Capitol Hill insurrection was described variously as a "coup" and as part of “a wider political effort to shift the BBC reporting to the right on key issues.” *Guardian* media editor Michael Savage noted that Michael Prescott, a former external advisor to the BBC’s Editorial Standards Committee (EGSC), was once political editor of the Rupert Murdoch owned *Sunday Times*. Robbie Gibb, a non-executive BBC director opposed to Director General Davie, had been Communications Chief for the former Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May. Further, he had contributed to the founding of right-wing television and radio news channel GB news (Savage, 2025).

The 2022, 2023 and 2024 JMAD media ownership reports overviewed the concentrations and financialisation of US newspaper ownership. Successive studies on the state of local news from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism revealed that mega chains owned by hedge funds, private equity groups and other investment firms acquired, downsized and/or discontinued hundreds of newspapers. Chief perpetrators were the two largest chains – Gannett/Gatehouse and Alden/MediaNews, respectively. The former is parented by the New Media Investment Group, which is owned and managed by the private equity group Fortress Investment. The Alden/MediaNews Group is controlled by Alden Global Capital, a New York hedge fund. Combined, they held 462 titles in 2025 compared to 480 in 2024, a deletion of 18. Overall, the concentrated ownership structure of US newspapers has remained. In 2025, 60% of all dailies and nearly 25% of all titles were controlled by the 10 largest companies. From July 2024 to September 2025, news deserts spread. Thus, 213 of all 3,143 US counties have zero locally based news sources, up from the 206 recorded in the 2024 Medill School report. Although digital-only local news sites have emerged over recent years, most are concentrated in urban areas where news deserts are less common (Metzger, 2025).

Although the consolidation of media and news media ownership outlined here draws mainly on US and United Kingdom material, the trend is transnational rather than national. That was indicated in December 2024 with the announcement that Omnigroup would acquire the Interpublic group to create the world’s largest advertising and market communications corporate (Burgi, 2024). As of November 2025, the deal was valued at approximately US$13 billion, and the combined entity’s revenue was expected to exceed US$25 billion (D. Hayes, 2025b). On December 2 Omnicom CEO John Wren reportedly said that acquisition related layoffs would likely reach 4,000. Between December 2024 and December 2025 Omnicom cut 3,000 jobs while Interpublic shed 3,200 roles (O’Reilly, 2025). Lara O`Reilly, reporter for the Business Insider, provided an apt summary of developments. “By merging, Omnicom - IPG can reduce operating costs by consolidating systems. The new company can also leverage its collective client ad spending from the world's biggest brands to negotiate better deals with media owners and tech platforms" (O'Reilly, 2025).

2. Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership: Categories and Shareholdings

Merja Myllylahti

In 2025, there were major shifts in New Zealand's media ownership structures as media companies sought better financial returns and viability. Stuff Group's owner and publisher Sinead Boucher sold 50% of Stuff Digital – the publisher of *stuff.co.nz* news site – to marketplace portal Trade Me. The deal marked a shift in Stuff's ownership model as its digital arm became partly owned by a corporation. Furthermore, in August, Sky announced that it was purchasing Discovery New Zealand, owner of the free-to-air TV channel Three and Three Now for NZ$1. During 2025, billionaires surfaced as media barons. In the past, mining billionaire Gina Rinehart and News Corp's owner Rupert Murdoch have held New Zealand media assets but had sold them a long time ago. In March 2025, Canadian billionaire Jim Grenon bought 9.3% of NZME's shares, triggering a chain of events that led to major changes in the company's ownership and its board. By September, Grenon had lifted his ownership stake to 17.9% (Grenon, 2025c). After outdoor advertising company QMS took full control of radio and advertising company MediaWorks, the ownership of the company shifted from the US to Australia. American Oaktree Capital Management ceased its ownership in MediaWorks after 13 years, and MediaWorks became 100% owned by Australian private equity firm Quadrant Private Capital. During 2025, closures of community newspapers continued, and job losses in newsrooms continued with NZME cutting approximately 40 jobs. Public interest broadcaster RNZ also called for voluntary redundancies after budget cuts.

Three crown entity companies

Radio New Zealand | Te Reo Irirangi o Aotearoa

Radio New Zealand | Te Reo Irirangi o Aotearoa (RNZ) is the sole public-interest national broadcaster. It is commercial-free and receives funding through NZ On Air | Irirangi Te Motu and Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage (MCH). RNZ also receives other funding related to third-party contracts for specific content delivery. The purpose of its public broadcasting service is outlined in the *Radio New Zealand Act 1995*, particularly Section 8 which sets out that the broadcaster serves the public interest by delivering on the Charter. The Charter is reviewed every five years.

Both Paul Thompson and Dr Jim Mather remained in their respective roles, the chief executive officer (CEO) and editor-in-chief, and chair of the board. Mather's tenure as chair ends in June 2026. In 2025, RNZ appointed Patrick Crewdson as its first director of AI Strategy & Implementation (RNZ, 2025g). Before his appointment, Crewdson worked as Stuff's head of product development, and he previously held senior editorial roles including as editor-in-chief of stuff.co.nz

In 2025, South Pacific Pictures managing director Andrew Szusterman was appointed to the RNZ board of governors (P. Goldsmith, 2025a). Other board members include commercial radio executive Brent Impey, e-commerce boss Gracie MacKinlay, technology entrepreneur Mads Moller, Spada resident Irene Gardiner and former NZ On Air chief executive and current retirement commissioner Jane Wrightson.

This year, RNZ's funding was reduced by $4.6 million, triggering the broadcaster to call for voluntary redundancies (RNZ, 2025f). In 2023, RNZ received a $26m increase in its funding. According to its *Statement of Performance Expectations for the year ending 30 June 2026*, RNZ's total funding and other revenue reached $72,247 million, of which 66,918 was government funding (RNZ, 2025a).

Television New Zealand | Te Reo Tātaki o Aotearoa

Television New Zealand |Te Reo Tātaki (TVNZ) is a crown entity company and is governed by a board of directors, who are appointed by the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Media and Communications. TVNZ has editorial independence, enshrined in the *Television New Zealand Act 2003,* which means that it is free from political influence. However, it must comply with different legislations including the *Broadcasting Act 1989*, *Companies Act 1993* and *Crown Entities Act 2004.* Additionally, it follows industry standards set by authorities such as the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority and the New Zealand Media Council.

In September 2025, Alastair Carruthers announced that he was stepping down as the chair of the board in November – before his tenure ended. In a surprising move, retiring Goldman Sachs New Zealand managing director and chief executive Andrew Barclay was then appointed as new TVNZ chair, starting his tenure on 3 November (P. Goldsmith, 2025b).

Other board members included deputy chair Ripeka Evans, John Quirk (reappointed) and John Fellet. Broadcaster Paul Henry was appointed to the board in June 2025. During 2025, Linda Clark was taking temporary leave from board duties as she was acting for former Deputy Police Commissioner Jevon McSkimming at the High Court ("Linda Clark is taking temporary leave," 2025).

The day-to-day management of the company is overseen by CEO Jodi O'Donnell, who was appointed to the role in 2023. In 2025, former Stuff Digital managing director Nadia Tolich was appointed to the new chief news and content officer role. In May, Rob Hutchinson stepped into the position of chief digital officer and Bernadette Kelly to a newly created role of chief people and corporate officer. According to O'Donnell, the new executive team is "reshaped to better support and drive our digital future" (TVNZ, 2025b).

In 2025, TVNZ announced that it was paying the government a dividend for the first time in four years. The broadcaster made a net profit of $25.7 million, and announced a dividend of $3.1 million (TVNZ, 2025e). The company's revenue declined by 2.7% year-on-year to $281.1 million, but digital advertising revenue grew 12.7%, reflecting the broadcaster's digital-first transition.

In March 2024, TVNZ informed its staff about restructuring of the company, resulting in job losses in news and current affairs programmes, such as *Sunday*, *Fair Go*, *Midday* and *Tonight.* The job cuts – 48.5 full-time roles – and not replacing vacant jobs were expected to save TVNZ almost $9 million (Todd, 2025). According to TVNZ, on May 31, 2025, the company employed 530 full time employees in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, "and those working remotely in New Zealand and overseas" (TVNZ, 2025g).

Whakaata Māori

Whakaata Māori is publicly funded by the taxpayer, through the Government's Vote Māori budget and funding agency Te Māngai Pāho. It is a national, Indigenous media organisation that promotes, revitalises and normalises te reo Māori and culture programming in both Māori and English. In December 2024, the broadcaster announced 27 job losses as it "found it would have large financial shortfalls in the coming years and concluded it needed to cut its costs" (Perese, 2025).

In 2025/26, the broadcaster's total income is estimated to be $44 million, dropping to $39.88 million in 2027/2028 (Whakaata Māori, 2025c). The government's latest budget offers more challenges for Māori media "with Min Potaka confirming no new funding beyond the existing baseline of approximately $110 million" (Hauiti, 2025). Furthermore, the government was "discontinuing temporary initiatives introduced by the previous Labour government, including $19 million to Whakaata Māori in 2023" (Hauiti, 2025).

In its 2025 *Social Value Report*, Whakaata Māori reported it had generated "more than $114 million in social value" during 2023-24, "more than double the organisation's annual operating budget" (Whakaata Māori, 2025d). The report states that the broadcaster has 2.5 million annual TV viewers, 4.8+ million digital users and over 172 million social media impressions. The report notes that Māori media delivers substantial "tangible cultural and social outcomes" (Whakaata Māori, 2025d).

Whakaata Māori's CEO is Shane Taurima (Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu) and the company is governed by seven board directors. Three are appointed jointly by the Minister for Māori Development and the Minister of Finance, while four are appointed by Te Mātāwai. The board is chaired by Jamie Tuuta, and other members include Peter-Lucas Jones (Deputy Chair), Whetū Fala, Kingi Kiriona, Dr. Reuben Collier, Tiwana Tibble and Holly Bennett (Whakaata Māori, 2025a).

Table 2. Aotearoa New Zealand media ownership: Categories, funding, and assets as of 6 October 2025

Company	Funding	Notable assets
Crowned owned entities		
RNZ	Public funding	RNZ Digital, RNZ National, RNZ Concert, RNZ Pacific, RNZ Asia, the AM network
TVNZ	Advertising, programme funds, other	TV ONE, TV2, OnDemand, onenews.co.nz, Re:
Whakaata Māori	Public funding	Māori Television, Te Reo, Te Ao Māori News
Independently owned media companies		
Allied Press (family-owned)	Advertising, subscriptions	The Otago Daily Times, The Ashburton Courier, Rural Life Canterbury, Hokitika Guardian, Mountain Scene, The Oamaru Mail, Southern Rural Life, The Courier, The Ensign, Greymouth Star, The News, Southland Express, The Star, The West Coast Messenger
Asia Pacific Report	n/a	asiapacificreport.nz
Crux Publishing Ltd	Substack, subscriptions	Crux
National Business Review (publisher owned)	Subscriptions	NBR
Newsroom (editor owned)	Advertising, memberships, subscriptions, donations, sponsorships	Newsroom, Newsroom Pro
Scoop Publishing Limited	Donations, subscriptions	Scoop.co.nz, Scoop Pro
The Spinoff	Donations, memberships, advertising, sponsorships	The Spinoff
Private-corporate ownership model		
Stuff Group (owned by an individual and a corporate)	Advertising, subscriptions, contributions, donations, grants	stuff.co.nz, The Post, The Press, Waikato Times, The TV Guide, Sunday Star-Times, Neighbourly, Ensemble, NZ Gardener, NZ House & Garden
Private equity ownership		
MediaWorks	Advertising	Rova, Mai Fm, The Edge, George, More FM, The Breeze, The Rock, The Sound, Magic, Humm FM, Tarana, Channel X, REX
Shareholder owned media companies		
NZME	Advertising, circulation, subscriptions, external printing, distribution, other	The New Zealand Herald, nzherald.co.nz, BusinessDesk, NewstalkZB, ZM, The Hits, iHeartRadio, OneRoof
Sky TV	Subscriptions, commercial revenue, advertising, installation, and other revenue	Sky Box, Sky Pod, Sky Sport Now, NEON, Sky Go, Sky Open, Three, ThreeNow, Eden, Rush, and HGTV

Private equity-owned media companies

MediaWorks

In 2025, American ownership of MediaWorks came to an end after Australian digital outdoor company QMS acquired 45% of its shares from the US hedge fund Oaktree Capital Management. Through this transaction, QMS's owner – Australian private equity firm Quadrant Private Capital – became 100% owned by the investment firm (MediaWorks, 2025a). After the deal, the company's board of directors "consists of representatives from our shareholders, QMS Media and Quadrant" (MediaWorks, 2025, n.d.).

MediaWorks' day-to-day operations are led by CEO Wendy Palmer. Other leadership members include chief financial officer Mike Asbridge, general counsel Rachel Callaghan, director of content Leon Wratt and chief operating officer Brad Morgan. The company's chairman is Barclay Nettlefold.

The company's full-year results for the year ending December 2024 showed "strong revenue and earnings before income tax, depreciation and amortisation" (MediaWorks, 2025b). In the financial year 2024, the company delivered revenue of $213 million (up 4%), and EBITDA of $38.9 million (an increase of 13%) year-on-year.

According to QMS, MediaWorks has over 600 staff across 25 offices in main regions, and "a stable of 10 market leading radio stations, 92 digital billboards and over 200 static billboards across the country" (QMS, 2025). Furthermore, MediaWorks says that it engages with "up to 3.5 million Kiwis across radio, digital and out of home (OOH) each week."

Private-corporate ownership model

In June 2025, Stuff Digital became partly owned by a corporation after Trade Me, a marketplace portal, became a substantial owner of Stuff Group's digital arm. The company took a 50% stake in Stuff Digital operators of New Zealand's news website, *stuff.co.nz* (Trade Me, 2025). In the previous year, Stuff was divided into two parts – Stuff Digital and Masthead Publishing. The Trade Me deal only concerns Stuff's digital business side; it excludes the publishing arm that hosts the main newspapers: *The Post*, *The Press*, and the *Waikato Times.*

Neither party disclosed financial details of the deal, but it meant that for the first time in five years Stuff brought an equity partner to the business. Stuff Group owner Sinead Boucher said that "I can't really comment on how significant… the capital injection is, but I will just say … we're both really pleased that we have finally been able to bring our two companies together and just get on and do some great new things" (Malpass, 2025).

Before the Trade Me deal, in February 2025 Boucher changed the number of shares in Stuff Digital from one share to 1 million (Daly, 2025). At the time, the statement from Stuff said that "Stuff Digital and Stuff masthead publishing continue to be 100% part of the Stuff Group, owned by our owner and publisher, Sinead Boucher" (Daly, 2025). Boucher had bought Stuff from Australian Nine Entertainment in 2020 for $1.

As part of the ownership restructure, Stuff retained "operational control of the business through the Chair's casting vote" (Malpass, 2025). Stuff Digital is governed by a four-person board. The board has an "equal representation from both organisations," while Stuff has operational control of the business "through the chair's casting vote" (Trade Me, 2025). Trade Me's board members are CEO Anders Skoe and Alan Clark (Trade Me's head of property). Stuff's members are Stuff Group owner Sinead Boucher (chair) and chief strategy officer Fei Bian Goh (Malpass, 2025).

As a result of the ownership change, Stuff's property section became Trade Me Property, branded, with listings, advertisements and some content shared across both platforms. Each month stuff.co.nz "reaches about 2.3 million Kiwis, while Trade Me reaches about 1.5 million overall, with a million visiting Trade Me property per month" (Malpass, 2025).

Shareholding companies

In 2025, NZME's ownership and governance went through substantial changes after Canadian billionaire Jim Grenon started to buy the company's shares. On 3 March 2025, Grenon announced that he had bought 9.3% of NZME's shares (Grenon, 2025a) – a move that marked the start of the substantial changes in the company's ownership and governance.

Soon after buying his first stake at NZME in March, Grenon started a campaign to remove all the directors of the company's board, proposing initially six new directors – including himself as a chair – to the board (NZME, 2025b). In a letter to shareholders, Grenon proposed that a new NZME board was needed because the "operational performance of the two core businesses has been mediocre, to sliding, for the past 8 years" and that "there has been a consistent pattern of over promising and under delivering since COVID" (Grenon, 2025b).

After twists and turns in the boardroom battle, NZME announced that Barbara Chapman would step down as the company's chairman, and that the board was supporting nominations of Grenon and Steven Joyce – former Minister of Finance – to the board (NZME, 2025c). At the annual meeting on 3 June, both men were elected and Joyce became the new chair (NZME, 2025d). Other board members include Carol Campbell, Sussan Turner (re-elected), Bowen Pan and Guy Horrocks.

In August, NZME revealed that it had established an editorial advisory board to "provide advice, support and constructive challenge to the NZME editorial team on matters of editorial policy and direction" (NZME, 2025e). This board is chaired by Miriyana Alexander, who is the former head of premium at the *NZ Herald*. Other members include lawyer Philip Crump, CEO of Childfund New Zealand Josie Pagani, and Brent Webling, former chief sub-editor at *The Dominion*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Dominion Post*.

In the first half of 2025, NZME made a $400,000 loss "after $5.2 million of non-recurring costs," which related to restructuring as well as legal and consulting costs "associated with the annual shareholders' meeting in June 2025" (NZME, 2025e). Job losses and closing down the community papers were revealed to have been costly at $4.4 million. The company's operating revenue dropped 3% to $166 million and net operating profit after tax was $3.4 million, 22% higher than in 2024 (NZME, 2025e).

As seen in Table 4, Australian investment firm Spheria Asset Management was the largest shareholder of NZME at the start of October. But by mid-September, Grenon had lifted his shareholding close to this at 17.9% (Grenon, 2025a). Under New Zealand legislation, individual shareholders are allowed to lift their shareholding to 20% before the takeovers code applies and individuals are required to launch a takeover bid (Chapman Tripp, 2019). As of 6 October 2025, NZME's share price range over 52 weeks included a low of $0.89 and a high of $1.13 (Figure 1). NZME is listed on the NZX Main Board and has a Foreign Exempt Listing on the ASX under the ticker code "NZM."

Table 3: NZME's substantial shareholders as of 7 October 2025

Substantial Shareholder Name	Date of Substantial Shareholder Notice	Total Number Held in Class	% Held
Spheria Asset Management Ltd	25/03/2024	35,702,300	19%
James Grenon	15/09/2025	33,694,802	17.9%
Pinnacle Investment Management Group	26/11/2024	20,517,147	11%
Osmium Partners, LLC	20/08/2025	10,433,513	5.6%

Source: NZME/NZX

Figure 1: NZM share price from 6 October 2024 to 6 October 2025

Source: ASX.

Sky Network Television

In August, Sky announced that it had completed the acquisition of Discovery New Zealand, owner of free-to-air TV channel Three and streaming app Three Now, for NZ$1 "on a cash-free, debt-free basis" (Sky, 2025a). Sky bought the company from Warner Bros. Discovery will continue to hold its New Zealand assets, including pay-tv channels and streaming service HBO Max.

Sky Chief Executive, Sophie Moloney said that the purchase helps Sky to "scale faster, accelerate our growth, and further diversifies our revenue streams, particularly in advertising and digital" (Sky, 2025a). Sky expects Discovery's operations to deliver annual earnings growth of at least $10 million by 2028.

After Warner Bros. Discovery had announced the closure of Newshub in April 2024 (home of *ThreeNews*), Stuff made a deal with WBD to produce daily news bulletins and take over the website. Its new 6pm TV bulletin, titled *ThreeNews*, premiered on 6 July 2024. After Sky's deal with Discovery New Zealand, in July 2025, Stuff CEO Sinead Boucher said that Stuff would continue to produce *ThreeNews* as a part of the deal (Stuff Reporters, 2025).

Sky's day-to-day operations are headed by CEO Sophie Moloney, and she is supported by six of the board directors. These are Philip Bowman (chair), Dame Joan Withers, Keith Smith, Mike Darcey, Mark Buckman and Belinda Rowe.

In August, Sky announced its full year results, describing them as "solid," despite a slight drop in revenue and EBIDTA. The company's revenue was $755 million (-1.5%) and EBITDA $148.5 million (-3%). It increased its dividend to 22 cents per share – an increase of 16% (Sky, 2025b).

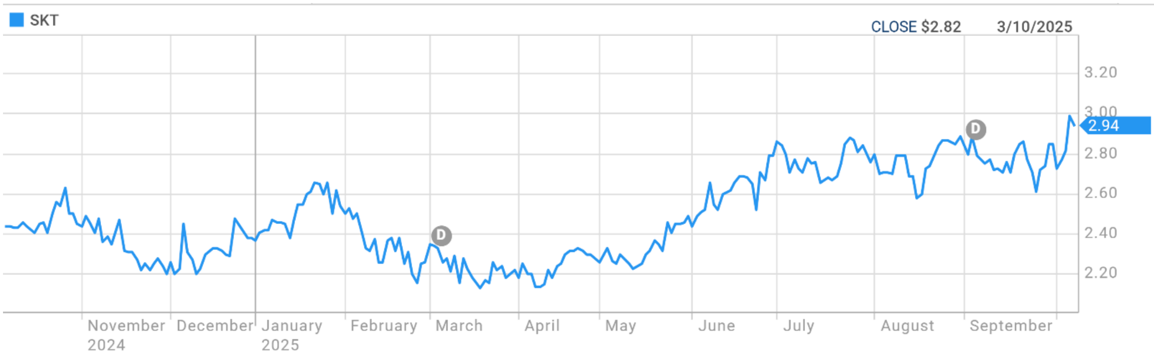
Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) has remained the largest shareholder of Sky, owning almost 11% of the company's shares. New Zealand Superannuation Fund holds 7.4% and Investment Services Group 5.10% of Sky shares (Table 5). As of 7 October 2025, Sky's share price over 52 weeks ranged from a low of $2.13 to a high of $3.00 (Figure 2). Sky shares are listed on NZX Main Board and have a Foreign Exempt Listing on the ASX under the ticker code "SKT."

Table 5. Sky's substantial product holders as of 7 October 2025

Substantial Shareholder Name	Date of Substantial Shareholder Notice	Total Number Held in Class	% Held
Accident Compensation Corporation	03/12/2024	14,543,637	10.6%
NZ Superannuation Fund Nominees Limited	02/07/2025	8,728,752	7.4%
Investment Services Group Limited	23/07/2025	7,026,157	5.10%

Source: Sky/NZX

Figure 2: SKT share price from 7 October 2024 to October 2025



Source: ASX.

3. Internet Media and Telecom Ownership in Aotearoa New Zealand

Paul Mountfort

Aotearoa New Zealand's digital communication infrastructure backbone is dominated by a coterie of powerful players whose control over broadband provision, mobile networks and satellite services prefigures media access and circulation. The Ultra-Fast Broadband (UFB) programme from 2009 has extended fibre availability to more than 87% of the population across 412 towns and cities, 1,387,460 homes and 656 marae (National Infrastructure Agency [NIA], n.d.; New Zealand Telecommunications Forum [TFC], 2024). Although access to preferential speed and data cap plans are bounded by affordability, as elsewhere, there are more internet capable mobile devices than people in New Zealand, and satellite is an increasingly viable option for rural dwellers. High-speed internet access is to be understood as both an economic necessity and a public good. However, with the increasing primacy of social media platforms for news and information consumption, the service providers that govern internet and telecommunications access effectively operate as de facto gatekeepers of the online public sphere. Reliance on fully privatised submarine (undersea) cable infrastructure for the bulk of internet traffic may also pose medium- to long-term risks to national sovereignty and data security. Te Tiriti o Waitangi frameworks in policy documents and settings urge a tino rangatiratanga and shared governance perspective that accounts for Māori interests and participation in our shared digital life.

Mapping the contemporary ownership landscape of internet and telecom providers in New Zealand reveals how ownership patterns, capital investment, and regulation configure access to online media and digital news as of 2025. This analysis is salient given that video-led media consumption on digital platforms, in particular, increasingly shapes public discourse. Here and internationally news consumption is increasingly accessed via such portals, while trust in traditional forms of reporting are in marked decline. The clear impression is that the social media services of platform capitalism increasingly fill the void vacated by more traditional news outlets. These, and indeed all, online platforms depend on physical and digital layers operated by a small number of domestic and transnational telecommunications firms who operate wholesale fibre backbones, mobile radio access networks, and emerging low-Earth-orbit satellite links. Reliance on these infrastructures and bundled services carries technological and cultural risks, the latter especially in an age when oligarchs dominate our virtual 'airwaves'. The following account aims, therefore, to situate the profusion of available online content within its material 'carriage', given that ownership and control of fixed, mobile, and satellite connectivity is crucial to the distribution and circulation of online media. It further situates these dynamics within the policy frameworks that organise the sector, including the UFB programme, annual Telecommunications Monitoring Reports (TMRs) (see Commerce Commission New Zealand [Commerce Commission], 2025b), Measuring Broadband New Zealand (MBNZ) performance testing reports (see Commerce Commission, 2025a), and the Telecommunications Development Levy determinations (Commerce Commission, 2025d). All this has implications for Aotearoa New Zealand's communications infrastructure in terms of media plurality and resilience, along with long-term network integrity and attendant national sovereignty.

Broadband infrastructure and market share

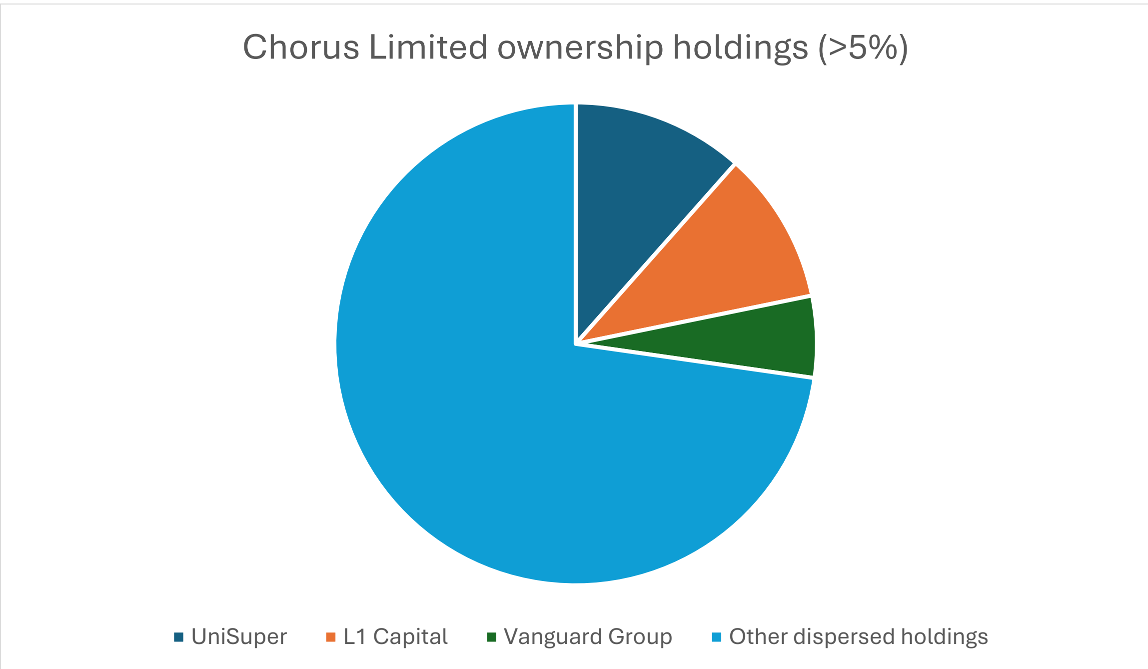
As of 2025, around 87% of the nation's population reside in areas covered by the UFB network (Commerce Commission, 2025b). Completion of the fibre optic cable infrastructure supporting this was confirmed by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) by the end of 2022 (2022). Apart from constituting a general public good, increasing geographic and demographic coverage should also be viewed within a Treaty obligations framework. The Digital Strategy for Aotearoa, which makes Te Tiriti o Waitangi foundational to connectivity policy, and commits the Crown to partner with Māori and uphold Māori data governance across digital infrastructure (Department of Internal Affairs [DIA], 2022), remains in force. The current conjuncture must be understood as the culmination of over 15 years of infrastructural development, over which time complex shifts in upstream ownership holdings have occurred.

Chorus New Zealand Limited (Chorus Limited)

Chorus, the central player in broadband infrastructure, built the spine of New Zealand's UFB network, in collaboration with Enable, Ultrafast Fibre (Tuatahi First Fibre) and Northpower Fibre. Chorus is publicly listed on the NZX (ticker CNU) with dispersed ownership. Recent substantial product holder (SPH) disclosures showing UniSuper at 13.34%, L1 Capital down slightly to 10.25% in September 2025 (NZX, 2025b) from 11.54% in June (Chorus, 2025b), and Vanguard Group with a significant new holding of 5.474% disclosed in late September 2025 (NZX, 2025c). All the rest are below the threshold for SPHs, with Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (via First Sentier) having reduced its holding to beneath the 5% threshold (to 4.313%) at the end of August 2025 (NZX, 2025a). BNP Paribas Nominees (NZ) Limited sits at 4.92% as at 30 June 2025, but it is a custodian omnibus not a single beneficial owner. See Figure 3.

As mentioned, the UFB initiative was launched in 2009 as a public–private co-investment programme, with the Government issuing an Invitation to Participate (ITP) and establishing Crown Fibre Holdings to select partners (Joyce, 2009). In 2017 the programme was expanded in two waves: UFB2 added 151 towns and fringe areas; and UFB2+ added a further 190 towns (Bridges, 2017a, 2017b). Chorus trucks with their fibre optic cable rollouts became common sights in formerly copper wire (POTS/DSL) delivery dependent neighbourhoods around the country. Chorus inherited the legacy copper network from Telecom NZ during the 2011 demerger and became a wholesale only infrastructure provider (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC], 2011; Chorus, 2023a). Chorus was the largest Local Fibre Company (LFC) by coverage and funding at around 69% of total rollout. Crown funding received by Chorus totalled approximately NZ$924 million for UFB1 and NZ$411 million for UFB2/2+ (around NZ$1.335 billion in total), via a mix of non-voting equity and debt instruments in the 2011–2022 financial period (Chorus, 2023a, note 6). Chorus supplies access to its fibre network to retail service providers (RSPs) on an equivalent, non-discriminatory basis as required under the fibre deeds and regulatory settings (MBIE, 2024).

Figure 3: Chorus ownership holdings (>5%)



Internationally, Chorus's exclusive wholesale posture is often compared with functional or legal separation models in other highly deregulated investment environments, such as Openreach in the United Kingdom and Singapore's NetLink NBN Trust, the wholesale passive fibre operator (Ofcom, 2019; NetLink NBN Trust, 2025). As demand for high-throughput and low-latency connectivity grows, Chorus has continued capacity upgrades, including Hyperfibre and significant metropolitan data capacity increases (Chorus, 2023a, Chorus, 2023b). In 2024–2025 it explored a trans-Tasman subsea cable project (Tasman Ring Network) with Datagrid linking the Australasian centres of Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, New Plymouth, Greymouth and Invercargill. However, in August 2025 Chorus reported that the project did not meet its investment criteria (Chorus, 2025a; Chorus, 2025b). Chorus has, however, provided backhaul to existing landing stations, for example the Hawaiki cable at Mangawhai Heads, underscoring its role in international and domestic connectivity (Submarine Networks, 2018). Backhaul denotes the terrestrial links that carry traffic between submarine cable landing stations and core network points of presence, such as carrier-neutral data centres, internet exchanges and carrier hotels.

Measuring and monitoring

Its centrality to national digital infrastructure means Chorus plays an outsized role in enabling the delivery of digital media, streaming platforms and cloud services. Independent, quarterly reports by Measuring Broadband New Zealand monitor real-world performance across fixed, fixed wireless and satellite services under the Commerce Commission. Chorus operates under price quality regulation set by the Commission (Part 6 fibre regime), which caps allowable revenue and sets quality standards.

The Commission's latest Telecommunications Monitoring Report (for 2024) analyses competition, pricing and affordability, and summarises how the fibre regime applies to Chorus (Commerce Commission, 2025b). Among its conclusions, the Commission confirms that the fibre rollout is done and uptake is high (about 83% of urban residential connections on fibre). Retail competition has intensified with the top three broadband retailers' market share down to 73% from 74% in 2023 and 78% in 2022; urban broadband is moderately concentrated (at a Herfindahl–Hirschman Index of around 2,148); and prices for urban fibre and cellular fixed-wireless are at or below OECD averages. The legacy copper network, meanwhile, remains pricier at about $NZ16 per month above the OECD average (Commerce Commission, 2025b). In a lowly populated island chain, rural delivery remains the challenge with 13% of the population living outside the UBF footprint (Ministry for Primary Industries and Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2023). Within the last three years, extreme weather events (Auckland floods, Cyclone Gabrielle) underlined a resilience gap. The industry was thus focused on moving customers off the legacy copper network and making network resilience a priority for regulators and industry.

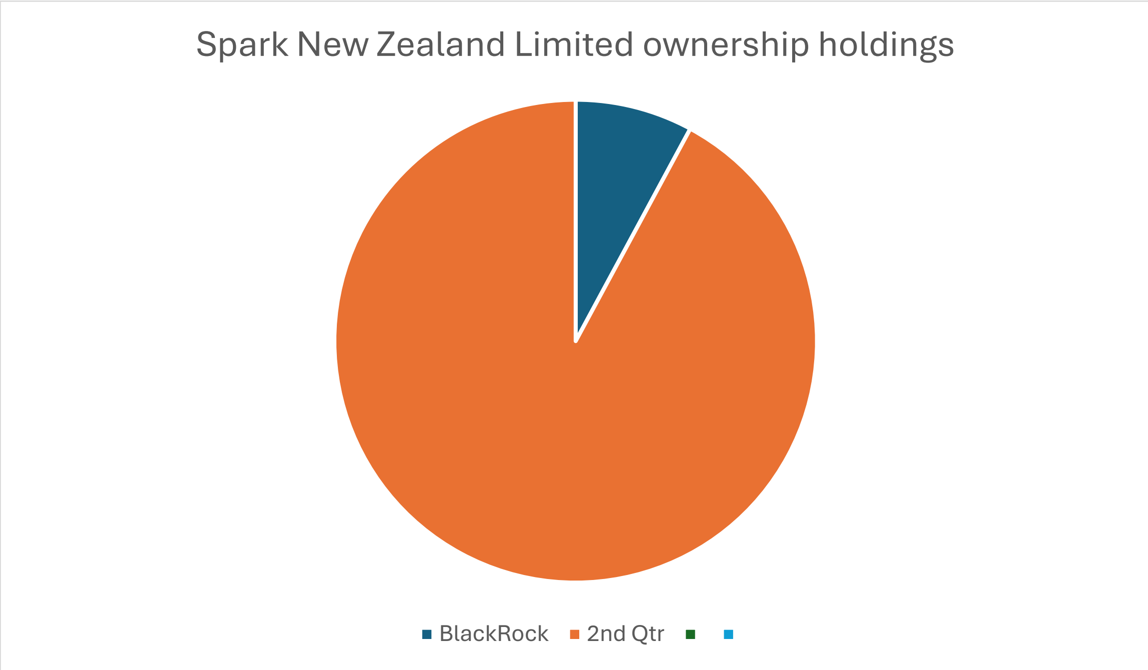
Telcos and ownership structures

While Chorus dominates fixed line infrastructure, retail competition is more diverse. As of 2025, the Commerce Commission's 2024 Telecommunications Industry Questionnaire shows retail broadband shares by connections nationally. They comprise, approximately, Spark New Zealand at 39%, One NZ 25%, and 2degrees/Orcon 20%, with the remainder spread across other brands including Mercury (around 10%) and Contact Energy (around 7%) (Commerce Commission, 2025c; 2degrees, 2025b). These smaller Internet Service Providers (ISPs) typically resell over open access fibre operated by Chorus and the regional Local Fibre Companies or use mobile operators' inputs for cellular fixed-wireless (Commerce Commission, 2025a). The current brand landscape reflects earlier consolidation: Trustpower's retail telecommunications base transferred to Mercury in 2022, at which point Trustpower rebranded its remaining "gentailer" (generator + retailer) business as Manawa Energy, and MyRepublic's New Zealand broadband customers were acquired by 2degrees in July–August 2023 (Commerce Commission, 2025b). In mobile, the Commission reports market shares by connections of Spark at about 40%, One NZ 36%, and 2degrees 22%. Although cloud-hosted Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs), of which Orcon/Slingshot is perhaps the best known, have lowered entry barriers, their overall share remains marginal in New Zealand at around 2.5% of connections in the year to 30 June 2024 (Commerce Commission, 2025b).

Spark New Zealand Limited

Of the two main terrestrial cellular telcos operating in New Zealand, Spark NZ remains the largest telecommunications company in New Zealand by revenue and subscriber base (Spark New Zealand, 2025a). As of end-2025, Spark is a widely held NZX/ASX-listed company with no controlling shareholder; the FY25 annual report shows one disclosed substantial holder – BlackRock (7.88%) – with the Accident Compensation Corporation falling below 5% on 2 September 2025; the top-20 register is dominated by global custodians (e.g., HSBC, BNP Paribas) (Spark New Zealand, 2025a). See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Spark New Zealand Limited ownership holdings (>5%)



Upstream, Spark completed the sale of its remaining stake of around 17% in mobile towers operator Connexa in February 2025. Connexa is now co-owned fifty–fifty by CDPQ and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, while Spark remains an anchor tenant and retains ownership of active radio equipment and spectrum (Spark New Zealand, 2025a, 2024; Connexa, 2024, 2025). For the year ended 30 June 2025, Spark reported NZ$260 million net earnings, more than 2.6 million mobile connections, and over 660,000 broadband connections (Spark New Zealand, 2025a, 2025b). Although it enjoys continuing customer growth across its offerings, including the low-cost sub-brand Skinny, Spark's FY24 reported net profit after tax (NPAT) was NZ$316 million, down from FY23 adjusted net earnings of NZ$433 million; FY23 reported net earnings were NZ$1,135 million due to one-off items from the Connexa tower transaction and the exit of Spark Sport (Spark New Zealand, 2023, 2024).

Historically, Spark descends from the former state-owned Telecom New Zealand, which was corporatised in 1987, then privatised and sold in 1990 for NZ$4.25 billion to a consortium led by Ameritech and Bell Atlantic. The new entity was listed in 1991 as part of wider state asset divestments (Telecom Corporation of New Zealand, 2011). In 2011

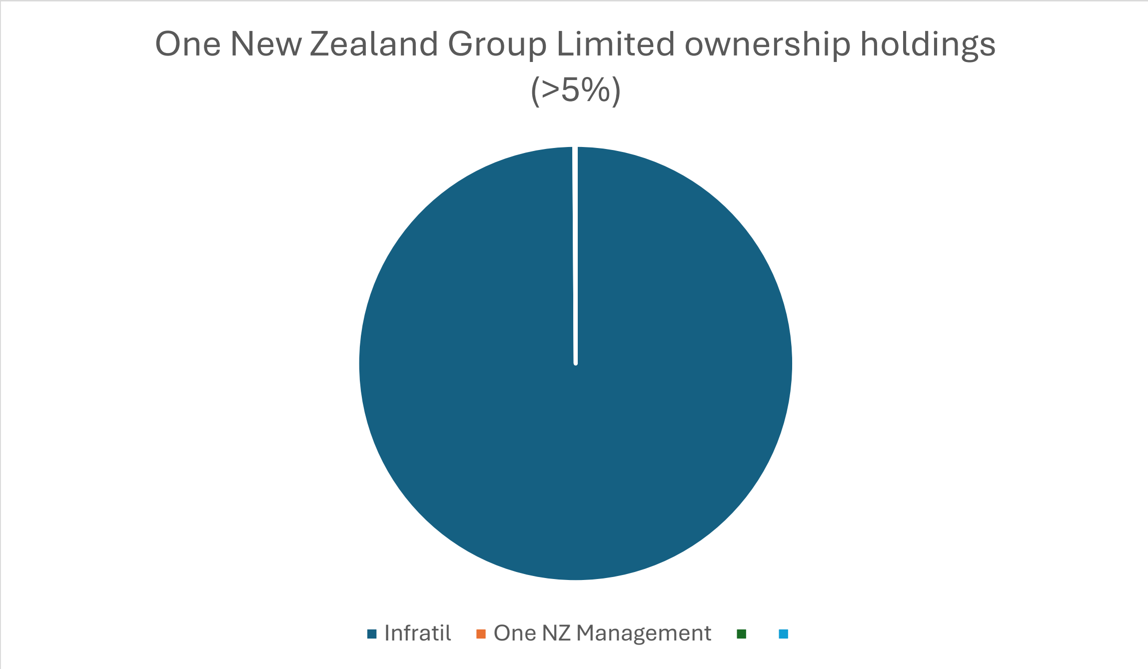
Telecom was structurally separated into wholesale-only Chorus and a retail/mobile business that later rebranded as Spark in 2014 (Telecom Corporation of New Zealand, 2011; SEC, 2011; NZ Herald, 2014). Since then, Spark has evolved from a traditional telco into a digital services provider across fixed broadband, mobile, and wider Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services. Its 2025 report highlights network adjacent assets, including a joint arrangement in the Tasman Global Access submarine cable and an equity-accounted associate stake in Southern Cross Cables Holdings.

Spark's enterprise technology arm, Spark Business Group, provides cloud migration, cybersecurity and managed services, and participates in data centre services via a 25% stake in a new stand-alone company carved out of its data centre business, named DC Co (Spark New Zealand, 2025b). The business group also partners with Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure. Within this portfolio, Computer Concepts Limited (CCL) is a significant subsidiary. Digital Island Limited was sold at the end of February 2025 (its mobile services business was retained and transferred to Spark), with associated goodwill movements and a small loss on disposal reported (see Spark New Zealand, 2025a). Spark has led 5G rollout and repositioned around service platforms rather than owning content. It sold subscription video on demand (SVOD) service Lightbox to Sky in 2020 and now bundles third-party services such as Spotify Premium (Spark New Zealand, 2020; Spark New Zealand, n.d.). In resilience initiatives, Spark participates in emergency network programmes such as the Hourua joint venture to deliver priority cellular services for the Public Safety Network, though its participation in government-led digital inclusion frameworks ceased when the DIA lost dedicated funding in 2023 (Spark New Zealand, 2023; DIA, 2024).

One New Zealand Group Limited

One NZ (formerly Vodafone NZ) comes a close second within New Zealand's telco duopoly. It provides very wide 4G and 5G coverage and, per independent measurement, is a close contender for Spark's crown with some 1.9 million mobile and 363,500 broadband connections (Infratil, 2025). As of 2025, One NZ is effectively wholly owned by domestically based investment company Infratil, which increased its stake from 49.95% to 99.90% in June 2023 (Infratil, 2023a). See Figure 5.

Figure 5. One New Zealand Limited ownership holdings (>5%)

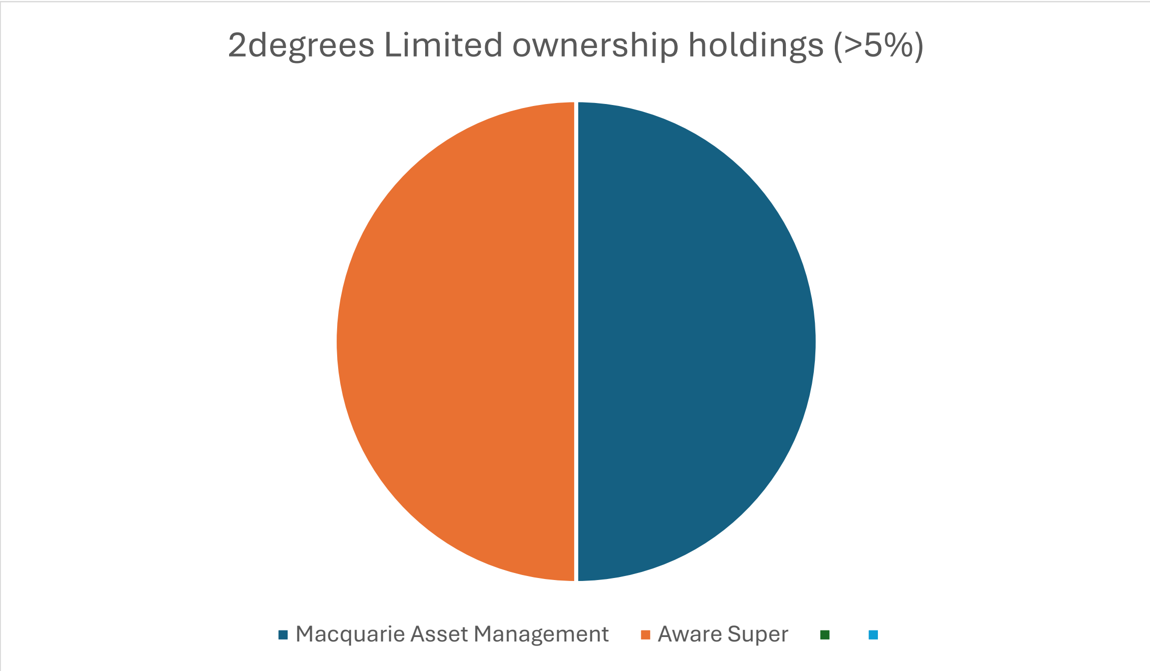


Upstream, One NZ divested its passive mobile towers in 2022 into Aotearoa Towers Limited, an independent tower company that is 80% owned by a consortium of InfraRed Capital Partners and Northleaf Capital Partners, with a 20% minority interest retained by Infratil (Chapman Tripp, 2022). The company completed its rebrand from Vodafone NZ in April 2023 (One NZ, 2022) after Infratil agreed in June 2023 to buy Brookfield's 49.95% stake in the company (Infratil, 2023a, 2023b). One NZ now leases tower access on a long-term basis. In satellite to mobile, One NZ launched a nationwide direct to cell texting service with SpaceX's Starlink in December 2024 and expanded device support and access through 2025, positioning the firm as an early mover in supplemental coverage from space (One NZ, 2024; One NZ, 2025). On network performance, independent measurement in 2025 finds One NZ leading New Zealand for Download Speed Experience and 5G Availability, reflecting its focus on wide 4G and 5G coverage (Opensignal, 2025).

2degrees Limited

While market share among the duopoly players has remained stable for the last two years, 2degrees Limited reported a milestone year in 2025. With its integration programme completed it positions itself as an integrated third operator across mobile, broadband and business services (2degrees, 2025b). 2degrees Group Ltd., formerly named Voyage Digital (NZ) Ltd., is owned by Macquarie Asset Management and Aware Super on a fifty-fifty basis via the Vocus platform and the Voyage holding structure (S&P Global Ratings, 2024; Moody's, 2025). In New Zealand, the immediate parent is Voyage Digital (NZ) Limited, which acquired 2degrees and Orcon following Commerce Commission clearance in March 2022 (Commerce Commission, 2022a, 2022b). See Figure 6.

Figure 6. 2degrees Limited ownership holdings (>5%)



Independent 2025 analysis for the Commerce Commission places nationwide customer broadband share at around 20% for 2degrees, consistent with the Commission's latest monitoring and industry questionnaire series for the year to June 2024 (Commerce Commission, 2025c; see Feasey, 2025). Using the Commission's totals of about 6.5 million mobile connections and 1.6 million fixed broadband connections for New Zealand, a 2degrees share of roughly 20% implies approximately 1.3 to 1.5 million mobile connections and roughly 400,000 fixed broadband customers. Note that the total count of mobile connections exceeds the population because individuals and organisations often hold multiple SIMs, including those in personal tablets, internet-enabled gaming consoles, and non-phone devices such as wearables. Large machine-to-machine – or Internet of Things – corporate fleets are also counted, when active, under the Commission's definitions (Commerce Commission, 2017, 2025b). Upstream, 2degrees completed a sale-and-leaseback of its passive mobile towers to Connexa, with a 20-year access agreement and a build commitment programme covering 450 sites for a total of more than one thousand towers (2degrees, 2023; Connexa, 2022; Chapman Tripp, 2023).

Concentrated infrastructure control

Previous figures show a moderately competitive retail market underpinned by highly concentrated infrastructure, a pattern deepened in 2025. Spark completed its exit from passive towers (early-2025), leaving Connexa owned 50/50 by CDPQ and Ontario Teachers, with Spark as anchor tenant retaining active radio equipment and spectrum. One NZ is effectively wholly owned by Infratil (99.9%) and now leases access after divesting its towers to Aotearoa Towers. 2degrees, integrated with Orcon since 2022, is owned 50/50 by Macquarie Asset Management and Aware Super via Voyage entities, with its towers held by Connexa under a long-term access/build programme. Most retailers depend on a single wholesale fixed-access network (Chorus and the LFCs), underscoring retail contestability but a concerning trend towards upstream concentration.

In broad comparative terms, New Zealand's structure (two incumbents plus a scaled challenger riding over a structurally separated fixed wholesale network) remains similar to peers that pair retail competition with a regulated fibre utility. However, the market's concentration and single point dependencies entrench infrastructural power and the rent extraction paradigm, with implications for long run innovation, resilience and democratic oversight beyond immediate consumer welfare. From a Māori data sovereignty perspective, ownership and control of networks that host Māori data should reflect tino rangatiratanga and shared governance values, not merely consumer welfare tests (Te Mana Raraunga, 2018).

Satellite services

Satellite broadband and backhaul services remain vital in bridging New Zealand's rural connectivity divide, particularly in regions beyond the reach of the fibre UFB network. New Zealand is an early mover on direct-to-cell satellite integration at national scale via One NZ's Starlink texting service, launched in December 2024 and expanded in 2025 to broader device support and access (One NZ, 2024, 2025). Signalling a coming convergence of terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, comparable markets moved beyond pilots during 2025. T-Mobile formally launched a Starlink-powered satellite messaging service in the United States and Telstra advanced Starlink direct to cell trials in Australia (Verge, 2025; Telstra, 2025).

Starlink

By 2025, Starlink was embedded in New Zealand's connectivity landscape. Following March 2021 regulatory approval, it achieved strong rural uptake and independently tested download speeds of around 150 Mb/s, with performance now routinely referenced in sector monitoring (Radio Spectrum Management, 2022; National Emergency Management Agency, 2024; Commerce Commission, 2025b). While credited with lifting rural digital equity, concerns persist about affordability and market power. Low-Earth-orbit constellations now provide low latency consumer broadband in areas poorly served by legacy networks, marking a material shift in delivery options (Radio Spectrum Management, 2023). Policy settings are catching up: MBIE's 2023–2024 consultations consider how satellite services should be captured within telecommunications regulatory and funding frameworks (MBIE, 2023b, 2024). The National Space Policy embeds a Te Tiriti partnership commitment that sets expectations for non-terrestrial services to advance both consumer coverage and Māori interests and participation (MBIE, 2023a).

Unlike domestic telcos, Starlink and satellite more generally has operated outside traditional telecommunications regulation. However, this has tightened notably since 2024. MBIE opened a policy review on whether and how non-terrestrial services should be brought into levy and consumer-protection settings, signalling possible framework changes (MBIE, 2024). The Commerce Commission then confirmed Starlink will contribute to the Telecommunications Development Levy for the first time, reflecting its growing local footprint (Commerce Commission, 2024d). In parallel, the Commission's 2024 review of the Telecommunications Dispute Resolution Scheme (TDRS) recommended improvements (Commerce Commission, 2024b). Industry bodies pressed for stronger coverage (the Telecommunication Forum [TCF] via its 2024 submission to MBIE and ISPANZ via a 2025 complaint) (TFC, 2024; Internet Service Providers Association of New Zealand, 2025). The Telecommunications Dispute Resolution's (TDR) 2025 Annual Report and live members list clarify its scope: coverage is provided when the service is supplied by a TDR member (including retail telcos that resell satellite), but services bought direct from non-member satellite providers such as Starlink fall outside the scheme (TDR, 2025, n.d.).

With Starlink, legitimate concerns also persist over CEO Elon Musk's willingness to curtail or condition services in global hotspots according to his own judgments: in 2022 he claimed that SpaceX could not keep funding Starlink in Ukraine and asked the U.S.

Department of Defense to take over costs before reversing course (Reuters, 2022). Reporting from Walter Isaacson's 2023 biography described Musk as declining to enable coverage around Crimea during a planned Ukrainian strike. This was later clarified to say service there had not been activated (Isaacson, 2023a, 2023b). In 2023 Musk declared that Starlink access in Gaza would proceed only with Israeli government approval during a communications blackout (Borger, 2023; Reuters, 2023b).

Starlink's partnerships with One NZ and other retail providers reflect the increasing hybridisation of terrestrial and orbital infrastructure in Aotearoa New Zealand. These deals enable telcos to use satellite backhaul in mobile blackspots, and in 2025 One NZ expanded direct-to-cell availability and related satellite services (One NZ, 2024, 2025; NIA, 2024).

Pacific and Kuiper

Meanwhile, domestic satellite operator Pacific continues to serve the Pacific Islands and parts of rural New Zealand, often through community or iwi-led broadband projects, though capacity and latency constraints limit competitiveness with low-Earth-orbit offerings (see Pacific, n.d.). Upstream, Kacific Broadband Satellites Group, founded by Belgian-born and Singapore-based Christian Patouraux, is privately held and backed by private/institutional investors, with its Kacific1 project financed by multilateral lenders (Kacific, 2019). Asian Development Bank provided a US$50 million loan (with Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund co-financing), GuarantCo supplied a US$50 million partial credit guarantee to a European institutional investor, and IFC disclosed a 2025 refinancing for Kacific 1, indicating ongoing multilateral support rather than a single controlling shareholder (International Finance Corporation, 2025).

Regional competitive dynamics are shifting as Amazon's wholly owned subsidiary Project Kuiper moved into full-scale low-Earth-orbit deployment in 2025 and announced a major access partnership with Australia's National Broadband Network Company for services beginning from late 2025 to mid-2026. This indicates likely competitive entry pressure in the wider trans-Tasman market (Amazon, 2025).

On the policy side, the Government introduced a new regulatory regime for ground-based space infrastructure in July 2025, signalling maturing oversight of satellite–terrestrial integration. Sector monitoring continues to emphasise the need to ensure that open-access fibre exerts robust competitive constraints on vertically integrated retail markets alongside emerging satellite–cell partnerships and resilience objectives (MBIE, 2025; Commerce Commission, 2025a).

Submarine cables and geopolitical stakes

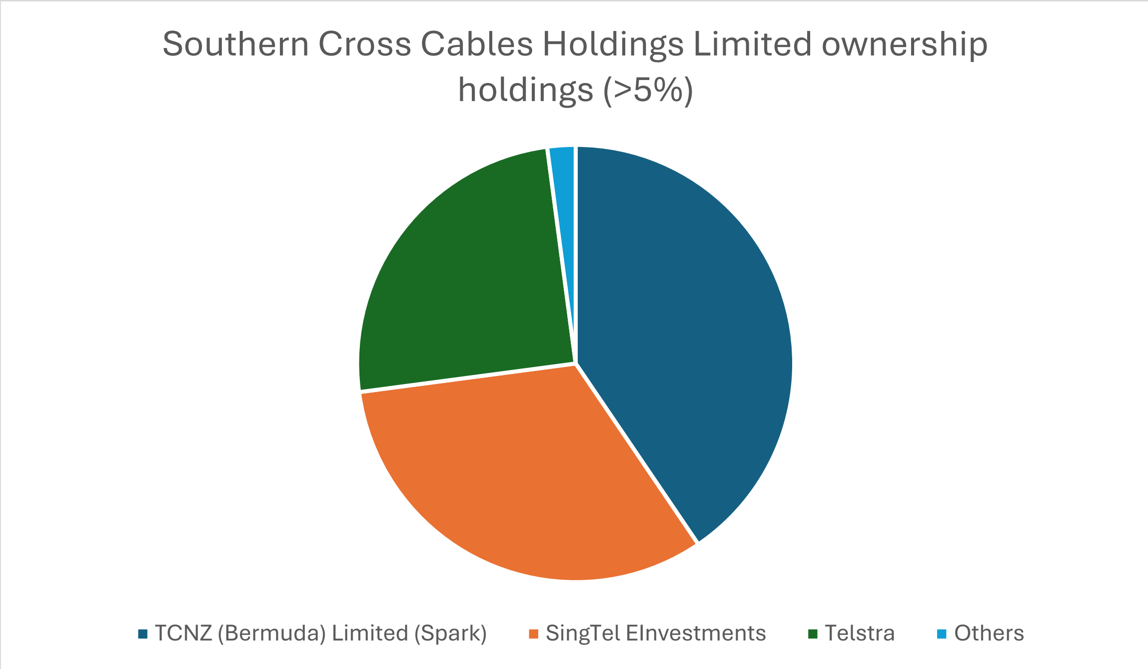
Users experience internet connectivity as if coming out of the ether, as it were, whether via wireless broadband, mobile or satellite. However, New Zealand's connectivity to the global internet is largely dependent on a small set of submarine cables: undersea fibreoptic systems no greater than the width of a garden hose that carry almost all international data traffic. As of 2023, New Zealand is served by four main systems: the Southern Cross Cable Network (SCCN), Southern Cross NEXT, Hawaiki, and the Tasman Global Access (TGA) cable (see TeleGeography, n.d.).

The Southern Cross cable holdings: Southern Cross and NEXT

The Southern Cross network linking New Zealand, Australia and the United States claims 50–75% of domestic traffic, making it the principal international bandwidth route alongside Hawaiki. As of late 2024, U.S. regulatory records list TCNZ (Bermuda) Limited (Spark) with 40.51%, SingTel Investments with 32.40% and Telstra with 25% as the only greater-than-10% direct owners of Southern Cross Cables Holdings Limited; Verizon Business and any others each hold less than 10% (Federal Communications Commission [FCC], 2024a, 2024b). See Figure 7.

In 2025, Ciena and Southern Cross demonstrated a 1 Tb/s channel on the live SX NEXT network, indicating further upgrade headroom (Ciena, 2025b). The Southern Cross NEXT extension is also run by the Southern Cross consortium but comprises a distinct 'wet plants' cable system. It entered service in 2022 and added an express Sydney–Auckland–Los Angeles path with a design capacity of 72 Tb/s, providing additional resilience for New Zealand's international connectivity (Ciena, 2022; Submarine Networks, n.d.-a).

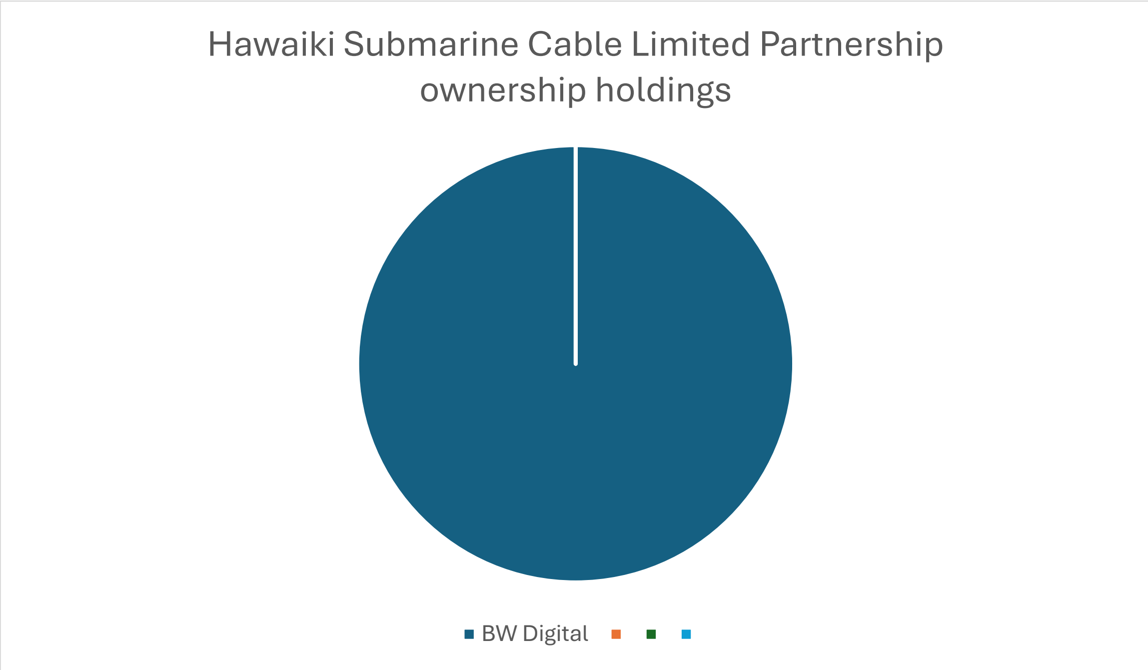
Figure 7. Southern Cross Cables Holdings Ltd ownership (>5%)



Hawaiki

Hawaiki Submarine Cable Limited Partnership is an alternative trans-Pacific system that entered commercial service in July 2018 (SubTel Forum, 2018). In 2025, BW Digital and Ciena demonstrated 1.2 Tb/s per wavelength over a 4,300 km span of the Hawaiki Transpacific Cable, evidencing continued upgrade headroom and resiliency on the route (BW Digital, 2025; Ciena, 2025a; Submarine Networks, 2025). Singapore-based BW Group, controlled by Andreas Sohmen-Pao, announced its agreement to acquire Hawaiki in July 2021. The 100% ownership deal obtained U.S. approvals (FCC/Team Telecom) in early May 2022 and was formally completed on 16 May 2022 (FCC, 2022; Submarine Networks, 2022a; BW Group, 2022; Troutman Pepper, 2022). See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Hawaiki Submarine Cable Limited Partnership ownership holdings

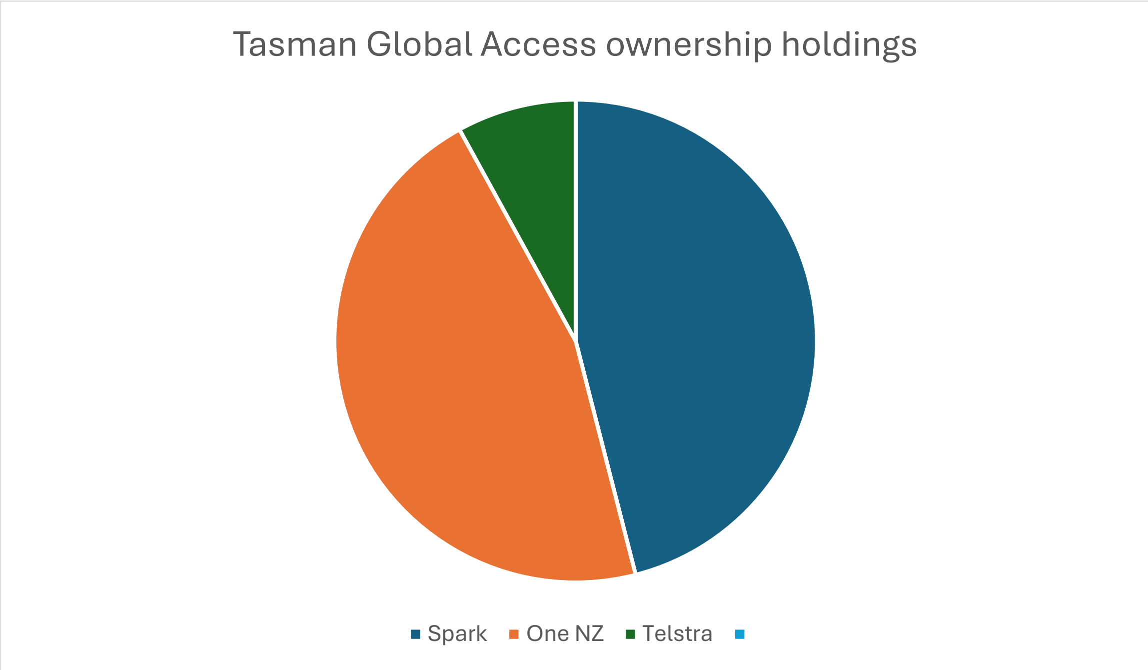


Hawaiki's published technical figures indicate an initial design capacity of about 30 Tb/s on the trans-Pacific route, initial delivered/marketed capacity of around 43.8 Tb/s at RFS, and upgrades taking design capacity to about 67 Tb/s (Submarine Networks, 2022b; SubTel Forum, 2018; Ciena, 2020). In practice, Hawaiki provides both supplementary capacity to, and resilience alongside, Southern Cross (SCCN/NEXT) during congestion or outages (Submarine Networks, 2022a).

Tasman Global Access

Tasman Global Access (TGA) is New Zealand's dedicated trans-Tasman system, an approximately 2,300 kilometre, two-fibre-pair link between Raglan and Narrabeen/Oxford Falls in Sydney, Australia (Submarine Networks, n.d.-b). In 2025, the Commerce Commission's Draft 2024/25 Telecommunications Development Levy determination recorded Tasman Global Access (TGA) as a consortium operated by Spark, One New Zealand and Telstra, and noted that the TGA joint venture itself is not a standalone 'liable person' (Commerce Commission, 2025d). Approximate holdings for these three sit around 46% apiece for Spark and One NZ, and 8% for Telstra (Spark New Zealand, 2014; Saarinen, 2016; One New Zealand Group Limited, 2016). See Figure 9.

Figure 9. Tasman Global Access ownership holdings



Built by Alcatel Submarine Networks and owned jointly by those three parties, it entered service in March 2017, adding route diversity to Australia and onward transit while strengthening international resilience alongside Southern Cross and Hawaiki (Submarine Networks, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; One NZ, 2017). The system was engineered for a design capacity of around 20 Tb/s, with the consortium positioning it as both additional headroom and a protection path for New Zealand–Australian internet traffic (Vodafone NZ, 2019).

Regulation and resilience

In New Zealand, network security obligations for telecommunications operators are governed by the Telecommunications Interception Capability and Security Act 2013 (TICSA), while the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) administers Part 3 network security processes (Government Communications Security Bureau, 2014; National Cyber Security Centre [NCSC], n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The January 2022 Tonga cable break underscored the fragility of Pacific subsea infrastructure, plunging the island chain into a substantive internet blackout for 39 days during a civil emergency; recent conflict-related damage elsewhere has been described as exposing the 'soft underbelly' of global connectivity (International Cable Protection Committee [ICPC], 2024; Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2024). In response to strategic competition, in 2025

Australia, Japan and the United States funded the completed East Micronesia Cable Pacific landings in Tarawa, Nauru and Kosrae, slated ready for service in November 2025 and signalling allied efforts to add resilient alternative routes (East Micronesia Cable System, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, 2025).

New Zealand's policy settings acknowledge resilience needs. In 2025 MBIE released a Regulatory Impact Statement following its 2024 consultation on enhancing regulatory and funding frameworks, signalling targeted adjustments rather than wholesale reform (MBIE, 2024, 2025). The Digital Strategy for Aotearoa and MBIE's Digital Technologies ITP highlight international connectivity and resilience with public–private approaches (DIA, 2022; MBIE, 2023a). The National Security Strategy applies a Te Tiriti partnership lens, and in 2025 government rescoped its Critical Infrastructure Resilience work programme toward managing cyber risks and published the National Resilience System Handbook to strengthen coordination and incident preparedness (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [DPMC], 2023, 2025a, 2025b). Under TICSA, operators notify NCSC of material network changes, declaring single-point dependencies and evidencing route diversity and failover before implementation (NCSC, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Industry practice and regional policy emphasise physical-risk scenarios and redundancy: ICPC guidance, TeleGeography's modelling of independent paths, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC] best-practice scoping (ICPC, 2024; TeleGeography, 2018; APEC, 2012). In the short term, accidental damage and local natural hazards dominate, mitigated by diverse landings and multiple systems. Over one to five years, geopolitical interference rises in salience as major-power tensions centre on the Asia–Pacific, with ongoing public–private coordination, change notification oversight, and exercising through the refreshed National Resilience System programme and handbook (Reuters, 2023a; CSIS, 2024; DPMC, 2025a, 2025b; NCSC, n.d.). Climate breakdown may threaten wet shore landing points and facilities via coastal degradation and extreme storms, alongside anchorage practices, even as additional routes and allied-funded systems improve resilience longer term (DPMC, 2023; ICPC, 2024).

In sum, ownership concentration across fixed and mobile carriage remains the decisive structural feature shaping media plurality and public debate. In 2025, market power is anchored by Chorus's regulated wholesale-only fibre position under Part 6 of the Telecommunications Act 2001. Chorus's shareholder movements in 2025 did not alter its dispersed ownership. Tower consolidation persists: Connexa (fifty–fifty CDPQ–Ontario

Teachers) and Aotearoa Towers (80% InfraRed/Northleaf; 20% Infratil) underpin a "duopoly-plus-one" retail market in which Spark and One NZ dominate while 2degrees scales as an integrated challenger. Spark has fully exited passive towers (Feb 2025) and remains an anchor tenant; One NZ is 99.9% owned by Infratil and leases access to Aotearoa Towers; 2degrees is 50/50 Macquarie–Aware (via Voyage) with its passive network at Connexa. Together, these arrangements hardwire dependencies between news content distribution and a small set of domestic and transnational owners and financiers, even as retail rivalry remains evident.

From a resilience perspective, 2025 policy and regulatory updates continue to prioritise continuity of service without materially altering the core ownership settlement. The fibre utility remains on a price–quality path; MBIE's 2024–2025 review work signals targeted adjustments rather than wholesale reform. Starlink's growing role sits partly outside traditional consumer redress and sector oversight, despite levy inclusion for the 2023/24 levy year. The National Security Strategy and associated programmes strengthen coordination and critical-infrastructure readiness, but the risk landscape still turns on concentrated ownership of tower, fibre and submarine assets, and on supplemental satellite partnerships that are governed by private commercial decisions.

Sovereignty concerns arise where international transit and hyperscale cloud dependencies intersect with concentrated domestic carriage. In a multipolar environment, shocks can propagate through cable systems, tower platforms and satellite policies with flow-through effects on information access and the economics of local media. A Te Tiriti o Waitangi perspective sharpens the stakes: tino rangatiratanga implies decision-making authority and shared governance over taonga, including data and communications pathways. Practically, the priorities are to diversify international routes and their governance, harden domestic networks with community and iwi participation, and align platform governance with public-interest objectives so that carriage does not silently narrow plurality through bottleneck control and rent extraction. Ultimately, plurality and resilience are not by-products of market rivalry alone but of ownership, power and public purpose. Securing them requires curbing bottleneck rents, enforcing structural separations where needed, and mobilising public and community capital for genuinely independent routes and diversified landings. It also demands strong state capacity beyond light touch settings and a Te Tiriti-grounded approach to digital sovereignty that centres mana motuhake, local stewardship of networks and data, and democratic accountability over private accumulation.

4. Broadcast and Pay Television

Sarah Baker

The television broadcasting industry comprises organisations that transmit visual content via free-to-air or subscription channels, typically through digital terrestrial, cable or satellite systems. The industry definition excludes revenues generated by subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) and internet protocol television (IPTV) services, as these are distributed exclusively through online networks.

New Zealand's television broadcasting sector is in a period of structural crisis, driven by a convergence of economic, technological and cultural pressures. Industry data from IBISWorld (2025) shows that revenues for traditional broadcasters in New Zealand have declined by more than 6% annually over the past five years, reflecting an accelerating audience shift toward global streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime Video. In Aotearoa New Zealand advertising revenue, once the lifeblood of free-to-air networks, has fragmented across digital and social media ecosystems, leading to programme cuts, newsroom closures and reduced investment in local production. There are signs, however, that, with the move to streaming, audiences still want programming featuring New Zealand content (NZ On Air, 2025c).

Public and commercial broadcasters alike are under strain. TVNZ, the state-owned free-to-air operator, reported significant revenue shortfalls in 2024–25 despite strong digital uptake on TVNZ+. During that period, Nielsen-style measurement, based on audience numbers, shows that streaming's share of total television viewing climbed to roughly half while broadcast dropped to historic lows – below 20% in some months. This demonstrates that based on viewer numbers, audiences are spending more time with SVODs and FAST channels (Free Ad-supported Streaming TV, internet channels that offer a live, linear TV experience for free, funded by advertising revenue) than with linear television (Nielsen, 2025b). Audience data continues to show that viewing incorporates a combination of linear and on-demand programme content. In terms of television viewing trends, approximately 75.4% of New Zealanders engage with NZ On Air-funded content on linear television. The highest-rated programme shown for 2024-2025 was Hyundai Country Calendar, attracting 54% of New Zealand viewers. Seventy-five percent of New Zealanders watched funded content on linear TV (NZ On Air, 2025c).

Intensifying competition from internet-based media platforms presents a significant and ongoing challenge to New Zealand's television broadcasting industry. Free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters, such as TVNZ, and subscription-based operators, like Sky Network Television Limited, have struggled to adapt to the disruptive effects of online media. Subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) platforms, most notably the U.S.-based service Netflix, offer viewers comparatively affordable and convenient access to television programmes and films. These services possess a distinct competitive advantage over live television, as they enable audiences to consume content flexibly across multiple devices and at any time (IBISWorld, 2025).

In March 2024, key programmes were removed from TVNZ. *Sunday* and *Fair Go* were axed. The TVNZ announcement of the 2025 programmes stated that "trusted news and current affairs will continue" (including shows like *Q + A* and *Seven Sharp*) The announcement further stated that "TVNZ's digital news focus will be amplified with even more short-form news clips and in-depth interviews available via News on TVNZ+, as well as across *1News.co.nz* and on *Re: News" (*StopPress Team, 2025a).

New broadcasting initiatives in the television sector show some effort in attempting adaptive innovation, moving from traditional broadcast models into online/multimedia forms. More non-fiction content is funded; some current affairs is maintained in digital form. However, the scale and reach of this content cannot fully compensate for what has been lost from broadcast television. For example, televised long-form current affairs programmes that reached live audiences have shrunk or ended. The shift to digital on-demand may reduce the audience overall. The loss of traditional broadcast news and current affairs has meant a shift in the public's attention toward online news sources and streaming platforms. The data from Nielsen (2025b) indicates that streaming platforms accounted for nearly half of all national television viewing by mid-2025. This may reduce the impact of current affairs in shaping public discourse.

TVNZ: Digital-first strategy and content innovation

Television New Zealand (TVNZ) has responded to the above-mentioned pressures with a digital-first strategy and a 2025 content slate focused on streaming growth and local production. TVNZ Chief Executive Jodie O'Donnell "said the broadcaster was in a strong position to leverage its mass audiences, advance its digital strategy and deliver on its aspiration to be New Zealand's number one streaming platform for local content, trusted news, entertainment and sport" (1News Reporters, 2025b).

TVNZ has a five-year Digital+ plan to transform into a digital-first media business. The key goals are to double the TVNZ+ 18-54 audience, triple advertising revenue and create a sustainable digital operating model, while reducing legacy cost structures (TVNZ, 2025a). TVNZ is investing heavily in a new technology backbone, replacing legacy systems with a cloud-based, IP-first platform (TVNZ, 2023). The year 2025 inaugurated their five-year *Digital + (2030) strategy* (TVNZ, 2025e). TVNZ's total annual revenue for the year ended June 2025 was down 2.7 % year-on-year to NZ$281.1 m (1News Reporters, 2025b).

Their model is shifting such that linear television (broadcast) becomes more of a consumer of their digital-first operations rather than the other way around. The interim FY2025 report highlights that TVNZ+ now reaches 1.65 million New Zealanders weekly, with digital revenue representing over 25% of total business (TVNZ Corporate Comms, 2025). The broadcaster is commissioning new local dramas and comedies, including *Warren's Vortex*, and restructuring the long-running soap *Shortland Street* from five nights per week to three mini-seasons annually (TVNZ, 2025h). These measures demonstrate TVNZ's adaptation to changing viewer behaviours and evolving production patterns for domestic content.

Competitors and market dynamics

Other key players in the New Zealand television market include Sky Network Television and Warner Bros. Discovery NZ (WBD NZ). Sky continues to operate a subscription television network while integrating streaming services such as Sky Go and HBO Max. WBD NZ, owner of Three and the streaming platform ThreeNow, has undergone operational downsizing and has explored changes to its free-to-air broadcasting strategy in response to financial pressures (Young, 2025). The dominance of global streaming platforms and the growing preference for on-demand, cross-device consumption have intensified competition, particularly for younger demographics, leading to fragmentation of traditional TV audiences.

In response to these shifts in viewing behaviour, media buying agencies have progressively redirected advertising expenditure from traditional television towards digital formats, including social media, search engines and other online platforms. As a result, the television industry's total revenue has declined, contracting at an estimated annual rate of 3.7 percent over the five years to 2022–23. This downward trend includes a modest

0.2 percent fall in 2022–23, reflecting the erosion of demand for conventional television broadcasting as online platforms continued to expand their audience reach. TVNZ's total annual revenue for the year ended 2025 was down 2.7% year-on-year to NZ $281.m The industry research firm IBISWorld estimates that the New Zealand television broadcasting industry's revenue will shrink at an annualised rate of -5.7 % over the five years from 2025-2026 (IBISWorld, 2025).

The challenging broadcast television environment means that local platforms can no longer afford to fund local content as was previously the case. It should be acknowledged that NZ On Air has made $9 million available for large-scale non-fiction projects. Chief executive Cameron Harland said, "We're supporting content with demonstrated audience appeal and cultural relevance – shows that help define who we are as New Zealanders. Rather than waiting for market conditions to improve, we're taking action to ensure local content not only survives but flourishes" (NZ On Air, 2025b).

Television industry challenges

Industry reporting and New Zealand broadcaster financial accounts show that total television revenues are under pressure. TVNZ reported lower overall revenue year-on-year in FY25, even though its digital advertising revenue grew substantially. Clearly, advertisers are reallocating budgets toward streaming and digital inventory (TVNZ, 2025a, 2025e).

In 2025, streaming services continue to draw audiences from the broadcasting sector. Netflix still leads viewership, with about 2.29 million viewers in an average four-week period. This is equivalent to 52.2 % of New Zealand viewers over the age of 14+. Disney + and Amazon Prime Video show strong growth with 835,000 viewers, which is a 166% rise in the same metric, (i.e. from four years ago during the pandemic to 2025) (Roy Morgan, 2025b). YouTube, though not strictly a TV service, is the most popular video-sharing site. Global video-sharing platforms reach about 64% of New Zealanders daily (NZ On Air, 2024).

Though television around the world has faced many issues there are very specific factors that are exacerbating the New Zealand broadcasting environment. While global streaming accelerates, this puts local production of television programmes competing against much larger producers – meaning that local programmes are at risk of being overshadowed. One commentator summarises the problem:

> Globally, the television industry has faced difficulties from strikes to shifting audience habits and tightening budgets. But here in Aotearoa, those issues have amplified. Competing

> against global streaming platforms like Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon is an uphill battle. These platforms dominate with big budgets, aggressive content strategies and global reach. They're happy to use or landscapes as a backdrop for their productions, but they don't invest in our stories, our communities, or our culture. (Osman, 2025)

Osman (2025) further argues that audiences "overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content available, often turn to big budget international shows over homegrown ones." Some countries, like France and Canada, require global streamers to redirect a portion of their revenue into domestic productions (Carragher, 2024). The New Zealand Screen Producers Guild (SPADA) has called for a levy on streaming platforms' local revenue, arguing that this should be reinvested in New Zealand local production (Osman, 2025).

Broadcasters are moving to Total TV/CTV/FAST strategies to capture streaming advertising dollars. Thus, TVNZ and other local players are investing in streaming platforms/FAST channels, ad tech (deploying unified ad servers) and measurement upgrades so that they can sell combined linear and streaming campaigns to compensate for advertising dollars lost to global platforms. TVNZ has deployed ad-tech to mirror linear campaigns to assist TVNZ+ and grow digital ad share (TVNZ, 2025c, 2025e). This means that advertisers buy a campaign for traditional broadcast TV (linear television) and that adverts run on TVNZ 1 or TVNZ 2. TVNZ's new ad-technology automatically copies (mirrors) that same campaign onto TVNZ+, their streaming platform. The advert also appears when viewers watch TVNZ shows online. This gives advertisers more reach without having to buy a separate digital campaign. This increased the amount of digital advertising revenue because more advertising is now being served on TVNZ+.

Broadcasters are having to pivot as global SVODs are growing commercial advertising offerings and revenues, making them more direct competitors for advertising spend. Netflix and other big streamers are expanding their advertising-supported tiers, and industry analysts project that Netflix advertising revenue growth and increasing competition for advertiser budgets will put increased pressure on local broadcasters in a small national market like New Zealand (Rua Aguete, 2025).

The overall advertising market for broadcasters and streaming services is fragmenting, which affects how advertising is measured and targeted. New Zealand broadcasters are investing in measurement partnerships and data targeting products to prove value and retain advertising budgets. In August 2025, Sky and TVNZ backed Nielsen as the NZTV measurement provider, with Ben Gibb, Think TV Chair, saying:

> This ongoing investment in TV measurement highlights that for New Zealand Broadcasters, independent and robust measurement continues to be crucial in ensuring transparency and trust in the market, enabling informed trading decisions (Nielsen, 2025a).

The erosion of advertising revenue has contributed to newsroom and programme cuts over 2024-2025. Advertising revenue loss and ongoing concerns have raised doubts about the sustainability of local news and production, with " $74 m of broadcast TV advertising disappearing in New Zealand" (Corlett, 2024). The pressures on advertising in New Zealand broadcasting have then only increased since 2023.

Some argue that the distinction between linear television and streaming no longer matters so much, and this can be simply attributed to television's evolution. Morris and Lucas (2025) point this out as follows:

> There's a lot of talk about linear TV being in trouble, but are we missing the point? How many New Zealanders even know what *linear TV* is? Is it TV broadcast through an aerial from a transmitter on the hill, via satellite, or is it just an app on their TV?"

They argue that any research agency knows it is becoming harder to get an accurate picture of where people see their television advertisements. The concept of Total TV, which combines broadcast linear TV and Broadcaster Video on Demand (BVOD), tells a distinctive story. Total TV is watched for an average of 207 minutes per day per person. This figure is 35% larger than that for global video-sharing platforms and 39% more than SVOD. The authors further note that Total TV is "an evolving hybrid of broadcasting and streaming with a stronger ability than anything else to build one thing advertisers want: reach" (Morris & Lucas, 2025). In this context, they suggest that Television networks can facilitate technology to turbocharge Television advertising (better than would be the case for streaming alone).

Regulatory developments: Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage

Government and regulators are exploring interventions to better protect local content. The Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage (MCH) 2025 Interim Regulatory Impact Statement and related proposals consider reporting or substantive obligations on global streamers to support New Zealand audiovisual content. This is a direct consideration of, and response to, streaming's dominance (MCH, 2025a).

The problem has been defined as declining production and engagement with New Zealand audiovisual media content, which undermines the societal and cultural benefits of seeing ourselves and our stories on-screen (including the democratic principles of local news and current affairs plurality). Overall, with the rise of streaming content on screens in New Zealand, New Zealanders are seeing less local content (MCH, 2025a).

Media reform proposals for broadcasting and streaming

In June 2025, MCH released a draft outlining significant reforms to the regulation of television and streaming services in Aotearoa, New Zealand. They aim to modernise the national media framework to reflect the rapid convergence of broadcast and digital platforms. Key recommendations include requiring smart televisions and digital devices sold in New Zealand to have local media applications pre-installed to improve the visibility of domestic services, mandating greater investment in, and discoverability of, local content by both broadcasters and streaming providers, and enhancing accessibility through increased captioning and audio description. The draft also seeks to make regulatory settings more platform-neutral to ensure balanced treatment between traditional broadcasters and global streaming platforms. According to the MCH and Newsroom reportage, these reforms are driven by concern that declining advertising revenues and intensifying global competition pose a growing risk to the sustainability of local broadcasting and the prominence of New Zealand stories. Culturally, this decline raises broader concerns about media sovereignty and local storytelling. The dominance of multinational streaming services risks marginalising New Zealand voices, Māori and Pacific content and locally produced journalism

Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage: Key recommendations

- Requiring smart TVs and digital devices sold in New Zealand to have local media applications pre-installed to improve visibility for domestic services.
- Mandating increased investment in and discoverability of local content by both broadcasters and streaming platforms.
- Enhancing accessibility through expanded captioning and audio description services. *(MCH, 2025c; Newsroom, 2025).*

Warner Bros. Discovery NZ (former owner of Three and ThreeNow) has downsized operations and considered withdrawing from free-to-air broadcasting altogether. Even Sky Network Television, historically the most profitable subscription provider, faces stagnating growth as audiences turn to cheaper or ad-supported streaming models.

However, it may be more accurate to describe the sector as undergoing systemic transformation rather than terminal collapse. Audiences have not disappeared; they have migrated. Broadcasters are re-positioning as hybrid digital content providers, investing in streaming, data-driven advertising and cross-platform storytelling. The challenge is how to rebuild sustainable business models and ensure that public interest content remains viable in a globalised digital market.

Television content and consumption trends

In April 2025, TVNZ announced that it was partnering with Milton Data to develop New Zealand's first co-viewing measurement solution. Co-watching (co-viewing) is the simultaneous consumption of video or television content by more than one viewer, usually within the same household or physical space. It also refers to people watching together online using streaming watch party features (TVNZ, 2025f). This new model to assess co-viewing was launched in late 2025.

Audience trends

Audience behaviour continues to shift toward streaming and on-demand viewing. TVNZ+ and Three Now demonstrate significant uptake, while traditional linear TV viewership is declining, particularly among younger demographics. Advertising agencies are reallocating budgets accordingly, favouring digital platforms that offer data-driven targeting and flexible engagement metrics. Live events, such as sport, remain key for retaining traditional audiences, with broadcasters leveraging premium content to differentiate their offerings.

ThinkTV, New Zealand's television industry marketing body, has addressed concerns about the evolving media landscape and its impact on television viewing. In an article entitled "Is TV finally losing its grip on audience reach?" published on 23 March 2025, TVNZ Head of Media and Digital Marketing Amanda Wisniewski challenges the narrative that television audiences are declining. She presents data indicating that broadcast TV still reaches 3.1 million people weekly, with a significant portion of the audience in the coveted 25 to 54 demographic. Wisniewski argues that while viewing habits are changing, television remains a powerful medium for mass reach and audience engagement (Wisniewski, 2025).

Furthermore, Think TV emphasises that New Zealand's media landscape differs from that of the United States. In an opinion piece titled "Hey media planners! NZ isn't a mini-America," ThinkTV General Manager of Communications Jacqueline Freeman (2025) pointed out that New Zealand's television ecosystem naturally progressed from linear TV to BVOD (rather than there being a drastic shift to streaming platforms). She highlights that "linear TV still commands 56.6% of total viewing" and, when combined with BVOD, rises to 64.9% (which contrasts with YouTube's 15% share). Freeman argues that comparing New Zealand's media habits to those of the U.S. can lead to misguided strategies and overlooks the unique aspects of the local market. In sum, ThinkTV acknowledges the changing dynamics of television viewing but asserts that television continues to be a dominant and effective medium in New Zealand. The organisation advocates for strategies that recognise and leverage the strengths of the local media landscape.

Key players in television and streaming

Television New Zealand (TVNZ) is the country's largest free-to-air broadcaster. It operates multiple linear (traditional broadcast) and digital streaming channels, reaching the majority of New Zealand households via terrestrial, satellite and online delivery. As of 2025, TVNZ's main channels are

- TVNZ 1 – General entertainment, news and current affairs. Includes 1News and factual programming. It has a strong public-service orientation and appeals to older demographics.
- TVNZ 2 – Youth and family-oriented entertainment, reality series and imported programmes. Focuses on lifestyle, comedy, and drama.
- TVNZ DUKE – Targeted at younger adult audiences, featuring sports, local comedy and alternative entertainment.
- TVNZ +1 (TVNZ 1 + 1 and TVNZ 2 + 1) – Time-shifted versions of the main channels, broadcasting one hour later.
- TVNZ KIDZONE ON TVNZ+ – Digital-only channel for children's programming, available exclusively via the online platform.
- Te Reo and Whakaata Māori programming – Distributed in collaboration with Māori Television on the Freeview platform, ensuring cultural representation. These channels are accessible on Freeview, Sky and TVNZ+, TVNZ's digital on-demand platform.

TVNZ +

TVNZ's digital platform TVNZ + (formerly TVNZ On Demand) is a free online streaming service offering live channels and on-demand content. It integrates traditional broadcast with internet-delivered video, reflecting TVNZ's transition toward hybrid broadcasting. It can be accessed via web browsers, mobile apps, smart television and streaming devices (e.g., Apple TV, Freeview, Smart VU, Chromecast). Content is free to watch but is supported by advertising rather than subscriptions. Viewers can sign in to create profiles, save favourites and resume viewing. The system uses data analytics to recommend programmes and track audience preferences. TVNZ’s dual broadcast-digital model reflects the wider trend in New Zealand towards hybrid delivery. Mass reach is maintained through free-to-air channels alongside adaptation to the growth of on-demand viewing. Its public ownership also means that commercial imperatives are not entirely paramount. There is a longstanding obligation to provide news, culture and entertainment to all New Zealanders.

TVNZ’s financial turnaround

The year 2025 marked a pivotal financial rebound for TVNZ, after a steep $85 million loss over the previous year, a net profit of $25.7 million was recorded. While overall revenue continued to decline, aggressive cost-cutting measures enabled the broadcaster to stabilise its financial performance. The period 2024-2025 saw an offset by a reduction in operating expenses (they fell from $108m to $261.2m). TVNZ reduced costs by $41.21.2 million (NBR Staff, 2025a). This reduction in expenses was also a result of a significant restructure that began in 2024. It set out to save $30m after the 2023- 2024 loss of $85m. This resulted in job losses and the axing of popular current affairs shows, *Sunday* and *Fair Go.* The current profits coincided with the broadcaster's first dividend payment to the government in three years (NBR, Staff, 2025). With the improvement in TVNZ’s financial situation, its chief executive has earned a bonus of $164,500, a reward for turning the broadcaster's performance around, which included lowering costs and building its digital audiences and revenue (Currie, 2025h).

TVNZ’s digital-first transition

Television New Zealand (TVNZ) digital-first strategy emphasises streaming growth and new content production. At the same time popular programmes on TVNZ in 2025 include the 6 pm News and the film *The Substance,* and children's favourite programme *Bluey*. 1News at Six had 698,000 viewers logged in this year. In total, TVNZ+ reached 2.17 million viewers who engaged with 205 million minutes of content each week. The best performing local programmes include *NZ cricket*, *Shortland Street*, *Hyundai Country Calendar* and *Off the Grid with Colin and Manu* (1News Reporters, 2025a).

The key aspects of TVNZ's 2025 strategy cover:

- Streaming Growth: TVNZ+ now reaches approximately 1.65 million New Zealanders weekly, underscoring the increasing importance of digital platforms in audience engagement.
- Revenue Composition: Digital revenue accounts for over 25 percent of TVNZ's total business, indicating a significant and growing contribution from online services.
- Local Content Production: TVNZ is commissioning new local dramas and comedies, including the series *Warren's Vortex*. This demonstrates continued investment in domestic storytelling. In addition, the long-running soap *Shortland Street* will transition from a five-nights-per-week schedule to three mini-seasons per year, reflecting evolving production and consumption patterns.

These developments highlight TVNZ's efforts to adapt its traditional broadcasting model to a hybrid digital ecosystem. By prioritising streaming services and reshaping content production, the broadcaster aims to maintain relevance, meet audience expectations, and support local content creation in a rapidly changing media landscape (TVNZ, 2025e, 2025h).

Leadership changes at TVNZ

A new chair has been appointed at TVNZ. Andrew Barclay, a former Goldman Sachs New Zealand executive, was appointed on 30 September as the new chair of TVNZ's board, effective from November 2025.He stated that "the state-owned broadcaster is emerging from one of the most challenging periods in its history". He replaces Alastair Carruthers, who was stepping down early after being appointed by the previous Labour government in 2023. Barclay is the third director Minister Paul Goldsmith has appointed to TVNZ's board, along with Paul Henry and ex-Sky Television chief executive John Fellet (NBR Staff, 2025b). His appointment officially began on 3 November 2025.

In October 2025, Simon Dallow, a prominent figure in New Zealand broadcasting, was reportedly preparing to step down from his role as the 6pm newsreader at Television New Zealand (TVNZ). Dallow has been a staple of the network's prime-time news for nearly two decades, fronting the 6pm news since 2006. He is thought to be considering other options, such as an interview segment or a correspondent role. This means that there will be a shakeup in who presents the news. While the specifics of his decision remain undisclosed, this move is expected to have implications for TVNZ's news programming and its audience engagement strategies (Currie, 2025i). In November, it was announced that Jenny-May Clarkson is to leave TVNZ's Breakfast show ahead of a 2026 refresh (1News Reporters, 2025c).

Warner Bros Discovery

Three is the linear channel owned by Warner Bros. Discovery, which acquired MediaWorks TV assets in April 2022. Three remains the channel name. It now sits alongside other WBD channels in New Zealand, including Three + for catch-up/on-demand content (Warner Bros. Discovery, 2025).

Three emphasised that despite earlier announcements of reducing full funding of content, it continues to have "over 50 local shows in production or development" in 2025 (through funding partnerships with funding agencies and commercial arrangements) (Clarke, 2024). With the changes in 2024, Three is no longer producing news internally as had been the case in prior years and instead uses external partner Stuff for its flagship bulletin.

Sky Television's acquisition of Discovery NZ

As indicated in Merja Myllylahti's chapter for this report, on 22 July 2025, Sky Television announced it would acquire 100% of Discovery NZ Limited (the New Zealand arm of Warner Bros. Discovery) for $1 on a cash-free, debt-free basis. The acquisition was completed on 1 August 2025. This move is part of Sky's strategy to enhance its content offerings and strengthen its position in the New Zealand media market. Sky stated that it is acquiring 100% of the shares in Discovery NZ Ltd, which owns and operates Three, its related streaming service Three Now, as well as Eden, Rush and HGTV. Sky chief executive Sophie Moloney said,

> We see strong value in ThreeNow's high-quality broadcast video-on-demand platform, and Three's mass reach. We're looking forward to creating opportunities to do more with our content, for more New Zealanders, in more ways that work for them-across a comprehensive portfolio of subscription and free-to-access platforms. (Pointon, 2025b)

Under the deal, Warner Bros. Discovery will continue to supply its premium content to Sky under a multi-year commercial agreement. The key question here is whether the acquired channels (Three, etc.) will remain free to air for viewers? Will they be folded into a paid/subscription tier, or otherwise changed in their business model? In Sky's statements about the acquired assets of free-to-air channels and FAST streaming services, they emphasise the benefit of "broader free-to-air reach" for advertising (Sky

Network Television Limited, 2025). The free-to-air channels, such as Three (and its associated brands) are likely to remain free to air for now, under Sky's ownership (for as long as the latter sees the value in free-to-air reach). However, Sky may use the acquisition to shift their business models towards more digital advertising. This could include a tiering of premium content and change in how to "free to air" is defined.

Freeview

Freeview is New Zealand's free-to-air digital television and radio platform. Launched in 2007 as a joint initiative of major broadcasters TVNZ, Warner Bros. Discovery (formerly MediaWorks), Māori Television and RNZ, government support assisted its creation. The point of Freeview was to provide New Zealanders with access to high-quality broadcast content without subscription fees, ensuring that free-to-air television remained widely available as the country transitioned to digital broadcasting (Freeview NZ, 2025). Freeview is not a content producer but a distribution platform. It offers more than 30 channels, which it says showcase the best of local and international content. Coverage is throughout New Zealand, and 2.7 million New Zealanders watch Live TV with Freeview. It aggregates and delivers channels via digital terrestrial television (DTT) and satellite. More recently, Freeview Streaming TV has used broadcast internet. This means that Freeview can now deliver content over the internet (IPTV/OTT) while still using broadcast infrastructure for live television. Essentially, it's a hybrid broadcast-broadband model: live channels via broadcast, on-demand, or extra channels via the internet. The core purpose of Freeview is to make free-to-air television accessible on multiple devices and technologies, including smart TVs, set-top boxes and mobile apps. The platform carries the main public and commercial networks such as TVNZ 1, TVNZ 2, Three, Whakaata Māori, RNZ and Prime, as well as regional and niche channels.

SVOD platforms (Netflix, Disney+, Neon, Amazon Prime, Max, etc.)

By 2025, the New Zealand television market, as indicated, was operating as a hybrid ecosystem, where local free-to-air services such as TVNZ+ coexist and compete with global SVOD giants such as Netflix, Disney+ Prime Video and Neon (Roy Morgan, 2025a). While all provide on-demand access to content, they differ fundamentally in ownership models, access models, audience targeting and national cultural roles.

TVNZ+ is a free, ad-supported streaming service. Its funding comes from advertising revenue, which comes out of TVNZ's commercial operations under Crown ownership. In contrast, international services like Netflix and Disney + operate on subscription-based models that generate recurring revenue without advertising (except in limited advertising tiers from overseas). This distinction means TVNZ+ is designed for universal accessibility, while global platforms focus on paid, premium content for segmented audiences. See Table 6.

In sum, data shows that advertisers are shifting away from linear television towards digital media platforms, with television's share of total advertising revenue declining over recent years (Commerce Commission, 2024a). Digital advertising is growing (NZ$97m in 2024), but it remains a small slice compared to linear television in absolute dollars. For TV broadcasters, such as TVNZ, digital advertising is becoming a critical part of the business model. They are actively attempting to grow digital revenue share to offset declines in traditional TV advertising. The shift suggests that while traditional television still has significant reach and presumably use value for mass audiences, its monetisation is under increasing pressure. Digital platforms, both online and digital television, are increasingly the focus for future revenue growth.

New Zealand television broadcasting is navigating a complex period of structural adjustment. Traditional broadcasters face economic and technological pressures, while regulatory reforms seek to safeguard local content and accessibility. Broadcasters such as TVNZ are responding through digital-first strategies, content innovation and hybrid business models, while competitors adjust to a fragmented, multi-platform landscape. The combination of industry adaptation, regulatory support and audience engagement strategies will be critical for ensuring the long-term sustainability of New Zealand's television sector.

Table 6. Pricing of Aotearoa New Zealand's streaming and on-demand services 2025

Company	Pricing Per Month
Acorn	($7.99)
Apple TV+	($14.99)
Amazon Prime Video	($10.99)
Disney +	(Starts at $16.99 standard package, premium is $21.99 no ads).
Netflix	(Starts at $17.99, Basic, Standard $25.99, Premium $33.99).
Neon	(Starts at $12.99 basic with ads, standard package (no ads, option to download content and watch offline, is $23.99 a month.

YouTube Premium	(Starts at $17.99, students can access a $10.99 per month prices with a one-month trial
Sky Sport Now	Day pass $29.99, Monthly pass $54.99, Annual Pass $549.99 a year.
Sky Entertainment	$28 a month - Sky movies add-on costs of $20 a month, and a bundle which includes Sky SportNow + Neon - and the Max Hub - is listed at $64.99 a month.
Sky Go	Free for Sky customers but can be watched using Sky open (free to air content). Starts at $45.00 per month.
Freeview	Free
Crunchyroll	Monthly Fan plan $9.99 a month, Monthly Mega Fan $12.49 a month via app Store listing, Annual Pricing Mega Fan Annual $124.99 via App Store.
Shudder	($7.99)
Shelter	($3.99).
DAZN	($29.99)
Whakaata Māori+	Free to access
AMC+	($9.99)
Tubi	Free
Docplay	($8.99)
Arovision-Arovideo OnDemand	(Starts at $3.99)
NZ on Screen	free
Hayu	($8.99)
beamafilm	Free access if a member of a participating library, $5.99 a month
Whakaata Māori	Free
Filmzie	Free
Waterbear Network	Free
Curiosity Stream	In app purchases $9.99 per month and $69.99 annual subscription.
Crunchyroll and HiDive	Crunchyroll is $9.99 a month for Fan tier and $12.49 a month for Mega/fan tier. H Dive is $8.99 a month
Mubi	($14.99 or $119.88 per year)
Kanopy	Free via libraries when accessed via a participating library membership

5. Streaming Channels and Services in New Zealand

Rachel Daniels

Transnational media companies have been operating across borders and servicing New Zealand audiences with a range of content. In New Zealand, such services began streaming from 2015 via subscription. They included Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+ and a multitude of other platforms. Initially referred to as Over the Top (OTT), these digital distribution services bypassed traditional linear television and delivered their content via the internet, going over the top of broadcast or satellite services. They are now more commonly known as streaming services or Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD). There are different on-demand services available to consumers. Local broadcasters TVNZ, TV3 and Whakaata Māori all have on-demand platforms: TVNZ+, ThreeNow, and Māori+, respectively. Their streaming services fall under the Advertising Video on Demand (AVOD) model. However, these are often referred to as Broadcast Video on Demand (BVOD) because they are exclusively broadcast content and do not stream services like YouTube or social media content. There is also Transactional Video on-Demand (TVOD), where viewers pay a one-time fee to purchase or rent individual content, such as a sports event or a movie. Neon is the only local SVOD service in New Zealand operated by Sky TV, launched in 2015, with a focus on HBO content. See Table 7.

Audience viewing numbers in New Zealand

Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime are the most-watched SVODs in 2025. As of August 2025, Roy Morgan measurement data shows that, on average, over 3 million New Zealanders aged 14+ (3,094,000 people) watch some form of SVOD. Table 8 shows the date the SVOD services started in New Zealand and growth over the years. This is reflected in the number of viewers as of August 2025.

Free Ad-supported Streaming TV (FAST) is available on TVNZ+ and ThreeNow. This type of service is a live stream available to audiences on a curated schedule, in a linear format, and offered on demand. Examples of what TVNZ offers to audiences are: FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and Bloomberg News (TVNZ, 2025d). ThreeNow offers CNN and Bravo.

American audiences have rapidly adopted FAST services. Fifty Seven percent of American audiences watch these services. These services are gaining traction among viewers experiencing “streamflation" and subscription fatigue. Offering large libraries of delivered content creates a simple, cost-effective alternative to paid streaming services. Advertisers have again generated revenue from traditional services that are free to audiences (without a paid subscription containing advertisements) (FilmTake, 2024; Navarro, 2025).

Broadcasting video on demand weekly viewers in New Zealand

Table 9 illustrates the number of weekly viewers who watch BVOD services in New Zealand. The weekly audience viewing numbers for Local BVOD show TVNZ+ has an impressive number of viewers per week, over double the viewers watching ThreeNow. Māori+ has a solid 92,000 viewers per week.

The top ten New Zealand programmes streamed on BVOD are listed in Table 10; all these programmes have received funding from NZ On Air.

Table 7. Transnational SVODs available to New Zealand audiences (2025)

Platform	Price	Content Focus
Netflix	$17.99–$33.99/month	Originals, global content
NEON	$14.99–$23.99/month	HBO, BBC, movies & series
Amazon Prime Video	$10.99/month	Global content, rentals
Disney+	$16.99–$21.99/month	Disney, Marvel, Star Wars
Apple TV+	$17.99/month	High-quality originals
AMC+	$9.99/month	Shudder, Acorn TV, limited library
Acorn TV	$7.99/month	British TV series: comedy, drama and murder mysteries
AroVision	$4.99–$29.99/title	Indie, curated films
Docplay	$9.99/month	Documentaries
iwonder	$6.99/month	Current affairs, documentaries
Curiosity Stream	$3.34–$8.18/month	Educational, science
Kanopy / Beamafilm	Free via libraries	Indie, festival films
Shudder	$7.99/month	Horror centric
NZ On Screen	Free	NZ film, TV, music
Whakaata Māori	Free	Māori series, films
Freeview	Free	Aggregated free channels, over 20 channels
TVNZ+ / ThreeNow	Free (with registration)	Local & international shows
Tubi	Free (with ads)	Cult classics, B-movies
Filmzie	Free	Indie European-funded films
SkyGo	Included with Sky TV ($45+/month)	Sky content – Skybox needed
YouTube Premium	$17.99/month	Ad-free YouTube, downloads
Waterbear Network	Free	Environmental documentaries, linked to NGOs
Crunchyroll and HighDive	$5.99-$12.49/month	Anime, Japanese series and animated films
Mubi	$12.99	Curated Arthouse film club
Hayu	$8.99/month	Reality TV was released the same day as the U.S.

Source: Flicks, 2025c

Table 8. Audience viewing numbers in New Zealand

Launched in New Zealand	Audience numbers (August 2025)
March 2015	Netflix: 2.292 million viewers
November 2019	Disney+: 1.06 million viewers
December 2016	Amazon Prime Video: 835,000 viewers
February 2015	Total Sky: Neon, Sky Sport: 1,284,000 viewers
November 2019	All other SVOD and pay TV, including Apple TV: 701,000 viewers

Source: Statista, 2025a, Roy Morgan, 2025b, Bingham, 2025

Table 9. BVOD weekly viewers in New Zealand

TVNZ+	1,590,000 weekly viewers
ThreeNow	694,000 weekly viewers
Māori+	92,000 weekly viewers.

Source: Roy Morgan, 2025a; Whakaata Māori, 2025b; ScreenScribe, 2025.

Table 10. Top 10 funded programmes on BVOD in 2024/25

Rank	Platform	Programme	On demand average streams
1	TVNZ+	*A Remarkable Place to Die*	230,408
2	TVNZ+	*Heavyweight With Dave Letele: Patched*	184,295
3	ThreeNow	Polk: The Trial of Philip Polkinghorne	169,427
4	TVNZ+	ADHD - Not Just Hyper	143,856
5	TVNZ+	Four Go Flatting	
6	TVNZ+	The 501s: An Inside Story	
7	TVNZ+	Paris Paralympics 2024	
8	TVNZ+	Ram Raid Mums	
9	TVNZ+	The Gone S 2	
10	TVNZ+	Diary Of A Junior Doctor	

Source: NZ On Air, 2025c - Calculated as total streams divided by number of episodes

Ownership of transnational SVODs

Netflix

As of third quarter 2025, Netflix's market capital value is US$524 billion, with a 2015 revenue of US$11.51 billion. There are 317 million Netflix streaming subscribers around the world (Rudolph, 2025; Owlando, n.d.). Founded by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph in 1997 in California, what began as a DVD-by-mail rental service in the year 1997, had by 2007 become a streaming service. As of 2024, Netflix began distributing live sports events, including WWE, Boxing and the NFL (Netflix, 2025; Evoca TV, 2025). Reed Hastings stepped down as CEO of Netflix in 2020, with Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos becoming CEO.

In 2002, Netflix went public through an IPO. Its shareholders now control Netflix through collective ownership. There are individual investors and company executives, such as Reed Hastings, as well as institutional investors who collectively own 60% of Netflix. Institutional investors own the rest of Netflix; the top three are The Vanguard Group, BlackRock Inc. and Fidelity Investments (FMR), which hold 22% of the company. These investment/asset management companies offer mutual funds, and are the second-largest providers of exchange-traded funds (ETFs) (Bullfincher, 2025).

New Zealand Netflix has around 5,000 titles available to local audiences (Flicks, 2025b). Compared to other countries, New Zealand has a small library. Most have over 5000 titles. Iceland holds the most, 9,765 (Stoll, 2025a).

Disney+

As of 2025, Walt Disney Company's market capital value is US$200 billion. Disney+ has an annual revenue of US$10 billion. There are 125 million Disney streaming subscribers worldwide. Disney+ offers 500 films and over 7,000 episodes to New Zealand audiences. Walt Disney Company owns Disney+, and the company consists of Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar, Marvel Studios, Disney+, Hulu, ESPN, theme parks and film studios, including 20th Century Fox, Lucasfilm and more. Its shareholders, including institutional investors such as Vanguard, BlackRock and State Street, collectively own over 65% of the stock. Individual investors hold a 35% percentage; these are board members and top Disney executives, including CEO Bob Iger. Iger holds 226,770 shares, 0.01% of the company (Flicks, 2025a; Walt Disney Company, 2025; Solanki, 2025; Tafradzhiyski, 2025; Stoll, 2025b).

Apple TV+

Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne founded Apple in 1976. Apple's market capital value as of 2025 is US$3.744 trillion. Revenue for the 12 months ending 30 June 2025 was US$408.625billion. Apple's owners are primarily large institutional investors, such as the Vanguard Group, BlackRock and State Street Corporation, which hold the majority of the company's shares, along with individual shareholders, such as Apple's Chairman Arthur Levinson and CEO Tim Cook. Unknown parties own the remaining shares (MarketScreener, 2025).

Apple owns 125 companies, including Beats Electronics, Intel Smartphone, Shazam and Siri. Apple TV+ launched in 2016, producing co-productions and original series. It is known for a smaller library of content but high-quality productions with 4K, HDR and spatial audio available to all subscribers at no extra cost (Keely, 2024). There are 45 million Apple TV+ subscribers worldwide. Apple TV+ library details are not publicly listed (Apple Inc., 2025; GSMArena, 2025). Since its launch in 2019 Apple has been spending US$5 billion a year producing original content. When competing with other SVOD streamers, this is a unique offering to viewers. In October 2025, the company diversified from their original content portfolio by purchasing the rights to the live sporting event Formula One, as well as NBCUniversal and the Peacock streaming service.

Amazon Prime Video

Amazon (AMZN) as of 2025 has a market capital value of US$2.72 trillion (CompaniesMarketCap, 2025). Annual revenue 2025 for U.S. Amazon Prime Video is estimated to reach US$5.64 billion in 2025 (Winslow, 2025). There are 220 million streaming subscribers worldwide (Lee & Elad, 2025). The New Zealand Amazon library has a low subscription rate and over 1,700 television series and 8,300 movies, a total of 10,000 titles. Amazon Prime Video is a service of the public company Amazon.com Inc., which is owned by its shareholders, including the largest individual shareholder and founder Jeff Bezos, who holds 9% of the shares. As Amazon is a publicly traded company, ownership is divided among many shareholders, including individual investors and large institutional investors such as The Vanguard Group and BlackRock. Amazon.com Inc. consists of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), an entertainment company; an online retailer; e-commerce; cloud infrastructure; and artificial intelligence systems. Amazon Web Services builds data units that host cloud storage.

As of September 2025, three have been proposed in Auckland, but only one was built: the data is housed in already-built infrastructure. This has raised concerns given that Amazon had promised local investment and jobs (Palmer, 2025).

Table 11 provides details of the individual and institutional investors for each of these four transnational SVOD services.

Table 11. Shareholders of transnational SVOD services

Transnational SVOD	Individual Investors	Institutional Investors
Netflix	60% Individual Investors e.g., Founder, Reed Hastings 1.25%	40% Institutional Investors: e.g., The Vanguard Group, BlackRock Inc. and Fidelity Investments (FMR) 22%
Disney	35% Individual Investors e.g., CEO, Bob Iger, 0.01%	65% Institutional Investors e.g., Vanguard, BlackRock, and State Street Corporation 17%
Apple	40% Individual Investors e.g., Chairman, Arthur Levinson 0.03% and CEO, Tim Cook 0.02%	60% Institutional Investors e.g., The Vanguard Group, BlackRock, and State Street Corporation 21%
Amazon	Individual Investors e.g., Jeff Bezos 9%.	62% Institutional Investors e.g., The Vanguard Group, BlackRock, and State Street Corporation 18%

Warner Bros. Discovery announces separation into Warner Bros. and Discovery Global

As of 2026, Warner Bros. Discovery will vertically separate to streamline its US$35 billion debt. Two publicly traded companies will be created. Warner Bros. and Discovery had consolidated in 2022 to create a company of scale to compete with the larger streaming and television networks. However, the consolidated company has incurred massive debt; with little growth and different content strategies a separation has been planned. Warner Bros. will stay with television, WB Motion Picture Group, DC Studios, HBO, HBO Max and WB Gaming Studios, as well as film and television libraries. The other company will be all the global networks, such as CNN, Discovery and free-to-air channels across Europe, TNT Sports in the U.S., Discovery+, and streaming service Bleacher Report (B/R). The entire package will come under the new name Discovery Global (Warner Bros. Discovery, 2025; Bloomberg, 2025).

Unlike companies such as Apple TV and Amazon Prime Video who have parent companies which can support their debts, Warner Bros. Discovery does not. Consequently, the split described earlier shows the volatility of the market. As traditional linear and pay television audiences subscribe to streaming services, rating drops and advertising revenue decreases throughout linear schedules and impacts the profitability of the television networks. Similarly, in the United States, Comcast created a separate company – Versant – in May 2025 for the purpose of housing the NBC Universal cable networks portfolio. Lionsgate Entertainment separated from its Starz cable network and film and television studio, also in May 2025 (Chmielewski, et al., 2025).

Tier-based subscriptions

The SVODs began launching tiered subscriptions to address rising subscription costs, offering viewers the choice to watch with or without advertisements at tiered prices. In New Zealand, local SVOD Neon has adopted a tiered advertising model. Neon's monthly plan with advertisements is $14.99, and the monthly plan without advertisements is $23.99. No other SVOD has launched their tier plan in New Zealand. Presently Neon has scheduled less than a minute of advertising per hour of content, along with low advertising frequency caps (Sky New Zealand, 2025c).

Australia has launched tiered subscriptions throughout their VOD market. Kantar research shows the following behaviours in the Australian market: AVOD tiers are in 30% of all households. Advertising tiers are growing in popularity among new Netflix subscribers, up from 42% last year to 60% in the first quarter of 2025. Paid, ad-free streaming (SVOD) now only reaches 68% of households, down from 72% a year ago. However, total paid streaming continues to reach 75% of Australian households, or 7.9 million households (Northedge, 2025).

In America, tiered models have been around for several years, and three out of four consumers are choosing advertisements over ad-free subscriptions. SVODs see the lower-priced advertising tiers as a growth business, with Netflix's earnings higher with tiered subscriptions (Filmtake, 2024; J. Goldsmith, 2025).

Jill Goldsmith (2025) summarises Antenna market research findings in America: 65% of new subscribers are opting for ad-supported tiers to reduce subscription costs; and 46% of streaming subscriptions are shifting to ad-supported tiers. Globally, Netflix's ad-supported tier has 94 million monthly active users. Disney's platforms (Disney+, Hulu, ESPN+) collectively reach 64 million ad-supported monthly active users. The ad-supported tier of Amazon Prime Video has 130 million monthly active users in the United States. The Antenna report explains the shift in consumer behaviour: when given a choice, 86% of consumers opted for ad-supported services. Ad-tier subscribers show no significant demographic skew and are just as loyal as ad-free users. The report concludes that streamers benefit from a dual-revenue model, advertisers gain access to engaged audiences, and consumers enjoy more affordable options.

Programme content

In 2023, a review of the NZ Screen Production Grant (NZSPG) led to significant changes, including its rebranding as the New Zealand Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR). The NZSPR supports both domestic productions and international co-productions that meet specific criteria. New Zealand productions that spend more than $4 million (including official co-productions) are eligible for a 40% rebate. A 25% rebate is available for international productions filmed in New Zealand that spend over $4 million (with a possible 5% uplift for those that spend more than $20 million and offer significant economic benefits) (see Tables 12 and 13).

Furthermore, there is a non-competitive 20% rebate for international productions that choose New Zealand for post-production, digital or visual effects work. The significance of this is that the industry generates $3.5B in annual revenue and supports around 24,000 jobs, contributing to trade and tourism. Every dollar invested through the rebate delivered around $2.40 return to the wider economy — through wages, services and international exposure *(Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade [MFAT*], 2025; Willis, 2025) (see Table 14).

International productions in the past that have been filmed in New Zealand include *The Power of the Dog* (Netflix), *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Amazon Prime Video), *Sweet Tooth* (Netflix), *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (Netflix), *Power Rangers* (Disney), *Cowboy Bebop* (Netflix), *Minecraft* (cinema release), *Chief of War* (Apple) and *Our Flag Means Death* (HBO Max/Neon). There have also been many NZ Productions & Official Co-Productions using the rebate, including *Creamerie* (Hulu/TVNZ), *The Gulf* (TV3, sold to Netflix and Amazon), *My Life Is Murder* (Acorn TV, Prime Video in some regions), *Kiri and Lou* (BBC iPlayer, global platforms) and *The Brokenwood Mysteries* (Acorn TV, in some Netflix regions).

With current economic challenges, the impact of artificial intelligence, Hollywood strikes and American President Donald Trump's threat of 100% tariffs on foreign-made films, the call is for the industry to be sustainable and the rebate to remain competitive. In March 2025 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) stated that,

> In 2023, the U.S. productions spent NZ$1.33 billion in qualifying New Zealand expenditure, with NZ$200 million provided in rebates and incentives, revealing the significance of incentives…sustaining this momentum into 2025 and beyond remains a priority. The economic ripple effect of filming, VFX, and post-production spending benefits local businesses nationwide. (MFAT, 2025 p. 4).

In this context, incentivising global streamers to come to New Zealand to film and use it as a location and production source to generate revenue for the New Zealand economy is a goal of the screen sector.

There are many films and series that were originally distributed by the New Zealand Film Commission and local production companies which have subsequently negotiated to be licensed to SVOD streaming services. Some of these titles include: *Hunt for the Wilderpeople, Tinā, The Ridge, Rescue from Whakaari, The Legend of Baron T'oa, Mister Organ, Friends Like Her, Whale Rider, Eagles vs Sharks, Uproar, Piano, Bad Behaviour, Guns Akimbo, Once were Warriors, Forgive us All, Dark Tourist, Madam, New Zealand Today, The Life, We are Still here, Falling in Love, Step Dave, Bookworm, A Mild Touch of Cancer, A Mistake, More than Gold, Flight of the Conchords, Ka Whawhai Tonu, We Were Dangerous, Red Mole Romance*, and *Stylebender*. Over 50 series produced in New Zealand are now on the Neon service. Reaching global audiences, where local content reaches international distribution, is a success story for the industry.

Table 12: New Zealand productions that have received NZ On Air funding and are also accessing the Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR)

Name of Production	Year	Genre	Duration	Production Company	SPR Amount
Be With Zee	2024-25	Children	Series	Be With Zee NZ	2,438,000
Mr Hugo's Little Library	2024-25	Children	Series	The Gibson Group	1,100,403
Good Bones	2024-25	Comedy	Series	Luminous Beast	1,385,000
NZ Spy	2024-25	Comedy	Series	Kevin & Co	1,973,850
Small Town Scandal	2024-25	Comedy	Series	Miss Scandal	1,755,500
The Sanctuary	2024-25	Comedy	Series	Kevin & Co	1,265,556
Warren's Vortex	2024-25	Comedy	Series	Kitchen Table Productions (WV) Limited	1,227,000
Kiwi	2024-25	Doc/Dra	One-off	Wheke Group	522,981
Coastal Wonders	2024-25	Doco	Series	Imagination Television	482,844
First Responders 3	2024-25	Doco	Series	Screentime	481,400
Ka Mate	2024-25	Doco	One-off	GFC Films	200,000
Poi Stories/Poi Takitini	2024-25	Doco	Series	NHNZ Worldwide	352,176
Stranded	2024-25	Doco	Series	Stranded Productions Limited	648,192
Tane Tarlton	2024-25	Doco	Series	Magnetic Pictures	240,000
Triple Threat	2024-25	Doco	Series	NHNZ Worldwide	307,282
A Remarkable Place to Die 2	2024-25	Drama	Series	Screentime	524,987
Blue Murder Motel	2024-25	Drama	Series	Great Southern	2,615,000
Bust Up	2024-25	Drama	Series	Lippy Pictures	2,108,000
Shortland Street	2024-25	Drama	Series	Television New Zealand	3,000,000
Earth Oven	2024-25	General Factual	Series	Earth Oven Productions	800,000
Secrets at Red Rocks 2	2025/26	Children	Series	Libertine Pictures	2,116,000
All of Me	2025/26	Comedy	Series	Luminous Beast	2,500,000
Happiness 2	2025/26	Comedy	Series	Greenstone TV	1,835,078
Killer Whale: The Disappearance of Alysha Hanin	2025/26	Doco	Series	Our Story	823,300
The Perfect Suspect	2025/26	Doco	Series	Warner Bros Int Television	1,117,420
Shortland Street 25/2026	2025/26	Drama	Series	South Pacific Pictures	2,296,100
Celebrity Escape	2025/26	General Factual	Series	Perpetual Entertainment	417,238

Celebrity Treasure Island 7	2025/26	General Factual	Series	Warner Bros Int Television	1,349,000
Coastwatch: Pacific Heat	2025/26	General Factual	Series	Greenstone	483,397
My House My Castle	2025/26	General Factual	Series	Warner Bros Int Television	243,916

Note. Productions that are granted NZ On Air funding and intend to access SPR have 6 months to confirm their finance, or the commitment is written back. The SPR amounts were allocated; in some cases, they may not have been drawn down. Source: NZ on Air, 2025c

Table 13: New Zealand productions funded by New Zealand Film Commission accessing the NZSPR 1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025

Name of Screen Production	Applicant Company	Official Co-Productions	Qualifying NZ Production Expenditure	Rebate Amount	Approval Date
Warren's Vortex	Kitchen Table Productions (W		2,919,031	1,167,612	Jun-25
Nadia's Farm Season 2	Warner Bros. ITVP NZ Projects 2 Limited		2,234,134	893,654	Jun-25
Mum, I'm Alien Pregnant	Up The Duff Ltd		2,865,709	1,146,284	Jun-25
The Brokenwood Mysteries Series 1	Brokenwood Productions Lim		9,899,546	3,959,818	Jun-25
Celebrity Treasure Island 2024	Warner Bros. ITVP NZ Projects 3 Limited		4,979,396	1,991,758	May-25
Badjelly	Badjelly NZ Limited	Canada / UK	2,968,527	1,187,411	May-25
Holy Days	Nun Run Ltd	Canada	5,573,609	2,229,444	May-25
Sachie's Kitchen Season 2	SK2 Productions Limited		1,001,264	400,506	May-25
Poi Stories/ Poi Takitini	Stuart Street Productions Lim		966,751	386,700	May-25
Mārama	Mārama SS Limited		3,799,945	1,519,978	Apr-25
Wild Heroes – Season 3	Wild Hero Productions Limite		934,659	373,864	Mar-25

Forgive Us All	Tumbleweed Films Ltd		4,954,761	1,981,904	Mar-25
My Dream Green Home	Warner Bros. ITVP NZ Projects 7 Limited		1,907,178	762,871	Feb-25
Pike River	31 Films Ltd		1,115,875	446,350	Feb-25
Kōkā	Aku Films Limited		971,734	388,694	Feb-25
New Zealand's Best Homes with Phil Spencer	EQM Homes Ltd		1,261,348	504,539	Feb-25
Tinā	Tu Fa'atasi Films Limited		4,298,664	1,719,466	Feb-25
Moss and Freud	GFC (Fashion) Limited	UK	3,905,679	1,562,272	Jan-25
Secrets at Red Ro	Libertine Pictures (Red Rocks) Limited		5,121,420	2,048,568	Jan-25

Source (NZFC) Some applications not yet final, still interim

Table 14. International productions funded by New Zealand Film Commission accessing the New Zealand Screen Production Rebate (NZSPR): 1 January 2025 to 30 June 30 2025

Name of Screen Production	Scheme	Application Type	Applicant Company	PDV	Qualifying New Zealand Production Expenditure	Rebate Amount	Approval Date
Surviving Earth	NZSPG	Final	Surviving Earth Ltd	Y	3,577,017	715,403	Jun-25
Star Trek: Section 31	NZSPR	Final	CNZ Productions Ltd	Y	493,385	98,677	Jun-25
The Lord of the Rings - The War of the Rohirrim	NZSPG	Final	Warner Bros. Features NZ Ltd	Y	3,482,387	696,477	May-25
Better Man	NZSPG	Final	Better Man NZ Ltd	Y	25,270,686	5,048,723	May-25
RuPaul's Drag Race Down Under S4	NZSPR	Final	Warner Bros. IVTP NZ Projects 5 Ltd	Y	709,270	141,854	Apr-25

Wolf Man	NZSPR	Final	Big Teeth Films NZ Ltd		30,953,504	6,190,701	Apr-25
I Am What I Am 2	NZSPR	Final	POW IAWIA2 SPV Ltd	Y	413,996	82,799	Mar-25
Rebel Moon	NZSPG	Final	The One Productions	Y	47,214,658	8,998,638	Mar-25
Avatar Sequels	NZSPG	12th Interim	880 Productions NZ Ltd Partnership		94,996,274	18,999,255	Mar-25
Alien: Earth	NZSPG	Final	Mr October Productions NZ Ltd	Y	3,129,089	625,818	Mar-25
Deadpool & Wolverine	NZSPR	Final	MVL Productions NZ Ltd	Y	9,120,925	1,824,185	Feb-25
Alien Romulus	NZSPG	Final	New Upstairs Productions Ltd	Y	8,314,626	1,662,925	Feb-25
Before - Season 1	NZSPR	Final	CNZ Productions Ltd	Y	1,873,822	374,764	Jan-25
Seal Team - Season 7	NZSPR	Final	CNZ Productions Ltd	Y	729,924	145,985	Jan-25
Carry-On	NZSPG	Final	LBO Productions	Y	4,957,296	991,459	Jan-25
Beyond Goodbye	NZSPR	Final	OKD Productions Ltd		4,588,747	917,749	Jan-25

Note. Figures are in NZD and exclude GST NZSPR: New Zealand Screen Production Rebate

NZSPG: New Zealand Screen Production Grant. LBSPG: Large Budget Screen Production Grant.

PDV: Post, Digital and Visual Effects. Source: NSFC.

Streaming revenue

The SVOD streaming market in New Zealand is projected to generate US$268.38 million in revenue for 2025. The United States is expected to dominate the global SVOD landscape, generating a substantial US$47.89 billion in revenue in 2025 alone (Statista, 2025b). The revenue from SVOD subscriptions presently has no return to the New Zealand screen industry; rather, it goes to offshore companies that own the transnational SVOD services. There is widespread concern about this within the wider screen industry, and a call to action: "The Love Local Campaign" was launched by SPADA (Screen Producers New Zealand) in November 2023 (SPADA, 2023). Irene Gardner, President of SPADA has called on the government to regulate international streaming platforms, seeking a levy on their New Zealand revenue. She states that,

> The streamers currently pay no tax in New Zealand, face no regulation, and use broadband infrastructure that was partially funded by our government. As has happened globally, their negative impact on local broadcasting viewership and therefore advertising revenue has been huge, which has been very challenging for local production. (SPADA, 2023, para. 4)

Amplify: A creative and cultural strategy for New Zealand.

After a consultation period in late 2024, the Government responded to a call to develop a national strategy for the creative and cultural sectors for 2025-2030. The approach focuses on identifying new revenue streams to support the industry to access growth opportunities. Specific legislation for review and alignment with broader government initiatives was proposed—with a focus on cultural exports and tourism. Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture & Heritage ([MCH] 2025d) reported a 10% increase in the number of New Zealanders engaging with our arts, culture and heritage, and aimed for 5,000 more people working in the creative sector by 2030. An implementation plan is available, including timeframes for actions. The Ministry will report on the Government's progress as it implements the strategy over the next five years.

Media Reform discussion document

In February 2025, MCH released the *Media Reform* discussion document. It presented five draft proposals "to create modern media legislation for New Zealand's media and content production sector" (MCH, 2025b, p. 5). The Government sought public submissions on the following five issues:

1. Ensuring accessibility of local media platforms - visible to audiences on devices such as Smart TVs so that local content can be easily found.
2. Increasing investment into and discoverability of local content - both streaming platforms and television broadcasters to invest in local content and help audiences to find it.
3. Increasing captioning and audio description - to ensure access for disabled New Zealanders.
4. Modernising professional media regulation - revise the broadcasting standards regime (including the Broadcasting Standards Authority) with platform-neutral regulation of professional media that focuses more on system-level outcomes.
5. Streamlining Crown content funders - consolidate NZ On Air and the Film Commission into a single entity.

In June 2025, the Ministry released a summary of the public consultation (MCH, 2025c). In essence, there was support for the protection of local content via levies and/or investment obligations on SVODs, accompanied by an emphasis on establishing the correct definition of local content in the first instance. Concerns were expressed regarding the financial impacts on the screen industry and the workability of the current international tariff policy. A key theme identified was the need for a simplified regulatory system applicable to all media content providers.

6. Radio and Audio Media

Rufus McEwan and Peter Hoar

Commercial Radio

In 2025 there were several changes in the commercial radio sector that included the announcement of new stations, the re-formatting of existing stations and changes to various lineups of on-air radio personalities. In May, NZME announced that it was launching iHeartCountry, a dedicated country music station that would broadcast on a number of frequencies as well as be available on the iHeartRadio platform (Beckett, 2025). The naming parallels between the station and the digital platform suggests an intention to strengthen recognition of the latter platform as well. Meanwhile, MediaWorks expanded the Breeze radio brand by launching Breeze Classic on the frequencies used by the radio station Magic (StopPress Team, 2025f). The strategy was explained by MediaWorks director of content Leon Wratt:

> Over the past year, we've been asking listeners what music they want. Some wanted a more classic hits playlist, while others wanted one that's more contemporary. So our solution is to launch Breeze Classic for those who love the classics from the late 60s, 70s and early 80s, while Breeze continues to play hits from the 80s, 90s and 2000s. (StopPress Team, 2025f)

Rather than simply re-formatting Magic to try a new brand, the announcement further explained that Magic would remain on the Rova app, illustrating the potential of digital platforms to overcome some of the limitations of radio spectrum scarcity. These approaches to radio formatting and the management of a suite of radio brands may become critical when radio spectrum licenses come up for renewal in 2031 (Radio Spectrum Management [RSM], 2025).

Most of these changes reflect business-as-usual for the radio sector. The two large commercial organisations are rationalising stations that are not achieving targeted audience metrics in order to pursue niche demographics that may achieve greater success (as reflected in Wratt's comments above). As NZME CEO Michael Boggs stated in relation to iHeartCountry, "by identifying this gap in the market and responding to changing listener preferences, we're demonstrating our commitment to delivering content that resonates with New Zealanders" (Beckett, 2025). Initial radio ratings did not immediately reflect the optimism of NZME executives that iHeartCountry could fill such a significant gap. The station only ranked 20th in the Total New Zealand

Commercial survey, with a station share of 0.6% and cumulative audience of 40,200 weekly listeners (GfK, 2025).

The wider trends of commercial radio listenership in 2025 were generally consistent with previous years. Newstalk ZB, of the NZME stable, retained the largest station share (14.8%) as well as the largest cumulative audience in the total New Zealand market (GfK, 2025). However, as noted by Newsroom co-editor Tim Murphy, in the 2025 ratings surveys for the Auckland market, Newstalk ZB was surpassed by music station Mai FM in terms of overall cumulative audience (Murphy, 2025a, 2025b). In the second survey for the year, Mai FM's cumulative audience result was higher than Newstalk ZB's in the crucial breakfast programming timeslot: "The result is a rare second place for Hosking's show in the country's biggest radio market" (Murphy, 2025b). Beyond Newstalk ZB's overall dominant position in the year's radio ratings, MediaWorks stations once again occupy ranking positions two through seven. This illustrates the tight balance between both organisations in which one can claim bragging rights for the number one radio station (NZME) while the other commands a larger total share of radio audiences (MediaWorks).

Table 15. Total NZ commercial radio – Survey report 3, 2025 (November)

Rank	Station	Audience Share %	Weekly Reach (000s)
1	Newstalk ZB (NZME)	14.8	603.6
2	Breeze (MW)	9.5	547.9
3	The Rock (MW)	7.9	444.4
4	More FM (MW)	7.2	485.5
5	Magic (Breeze Classic) (MW)	6.8	292.1
6	Mai FM (MW)	5.9	390.7
7	The Sound (MW)	5.6	312.5
8	Coast (NZME)	5.4	255.9
9	The Hits (NZME)	5.2	404.9
10	ZM (NZME)	5.1	439.6

All but one of the top ten commercial stations (Magic/Breeze Classic) saw small declines in their weekly cumulative audience compared to the same survey in the previous year, but this aligns with an overall small decline in total weekly listeners: 3,326,700 in Survey 2023 2025 as opposed 3,435,000 in Survey 3 2024 (GfK 2024, 2025). It is also important to note that earlier surveys in 2025 indicated higher total listening and that these comparative figures may also reflect seasonal variations in radio listening.

Advertising Revenue and Financial Performance

As with audience ratings, 2025 reporting for advertising turnover from the commercial radio sector was consistent with previous years, increasing slightly from the 2023 total of $267m (Advertising Standards Authority [ASA], 2024) to $272m in 2024 (ASA, 2025). Most of this revenue growth was in digital radio, which had increased to $17m from $13m in the previous year; however, digital revenue is still significantly less than the $255m attributed to conventional radio. The radio industry's share of total advertising turnover was slightly lower at 7.6% (compared to 7.9% in 2023), but this consistency is meaningful when compared with other sectors. Television saw turnover decline by $44m while newspaper sector turnover declined by $25m (ASA, 2025).

Despite relatively consistent revenue in 2024, Jana Rangooni, Chair of the Radio Broadcasters Association [RBA] stressed the challenges of the contemporary advertising environment: "From market power and ownership regulation to content regulation and advertising restrictions, our New Zealand radio stations and their owners face regulation where the likes of Google and Meta do not" (RBA, 2025).

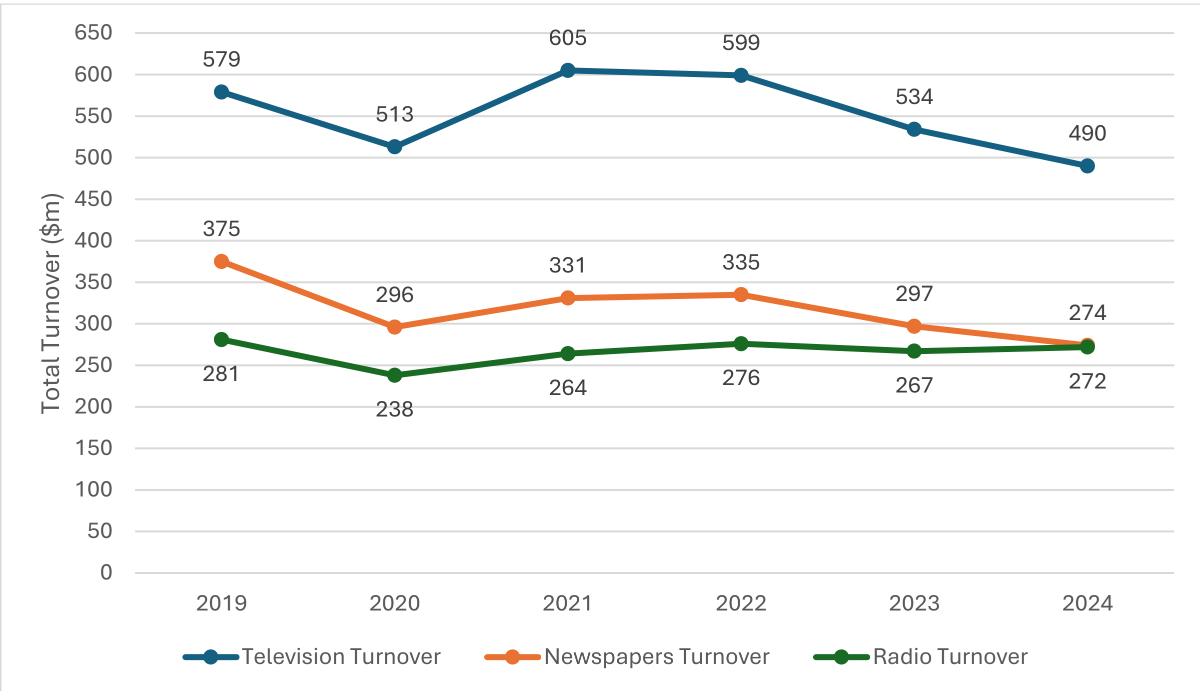
One of the regulatory changes that Rangooni called for in the report—the repeal of Section 81 of the 1989 Broadcasting Act which placed restrictions on broadcast advertising during some public holidays—has subsequently been signed into law (Broadcasting [Repeal of Advertising Restrictions] Amendment Bill], 2025). But the overall concern from Rangooni is that media sectors established before the advent of the internet are disadvantaged when competing with these newer global operations. Further, amendments to the existing Broadcasting Act provide "minimal redress of the current market imbalance but at the moment every dollar matters" (RBA, 2025).

While the share of advertising revenue for each of the three sectors is declining year on year—primarily due to the growth of digital-only advertising turnover—radio's share of advertising revenue is now close to equal with newspapers. Total radio revenue is more than 55% of the television industry's total. In 2019, before the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted trends in advertising turnover, the shares for television, newspapers and radio were 20.93%, 13.55% and 10.16%, respectively (ASA, 2020). Ultimately, while remaining susceptible to the widespread financial challenges confronting media organisations, radio's relative stability distinguishes it from comparable sectors.

Financial performance updates provided by both MediaWorks and NZME in 2025 also indicate that radio revenue is consistent for each organisation (NZME, 2025b; MediaWorks, 2025b). In its half-yearly reporting, NZME specified that "overall revenue was up 1% year on year, with broadcast revenue returning to growth" (NZME, 2025c, p. 24) while also specifying that digital audio revenue had grown by 6%. MediaWorks identified that revenue from its Rova app grew 49%, "well ahead of the market's 34% increase" (MediaWorks, 2025a).

In April, it was also announced that MediaWorks' majority shareholder, Australian-based QMS, would acquire the approximately 45% share owned by Oaktree Capital (RNZ, 2025d). Statements by Wendy Palmer, MediaWorks CEO, and MediaWorks Chair Barclay Nettlefold, of QMS, unsurprisingly expressed enthusiasm for MediaWorks radio's "incredibly strong position" alongside QMS core business of outdoor advertising (MediaWorks, 2025c). However, Shayne Currie of the *NZ Herald* reported in September that the two media businesses would be separated, leading to speculation that this would prepare MediaWorks radio for future sale (Currie, 2025g).

Figure 10. New Zealand Advertising Industry Revenue 2019-2024



Source: ASA Industry Revenue Reports 2020-2025

Radio New Zealand

2025 has been a complex year for Radio New Zealand (RNZ). It faced budget cuts, redundancies and a controversial review which was described as “scathing” in some quarters (Currie, 2025f) But there was also positive news about listener numbers and trustworthiness.

The 2025 New Zealand Budget, presented to Parliament by Finance Minister Nicola Willis on 22 May, proposed an $18-million cut in RNZ’s funding over the next four years. This would mean an annual reduction of $4.6 million. The cuts were justified by Minster for Media and Communications Paul Goldsmith on the grounds that there had been several funding top-ups by the previous government in 2023 (Smith, 2025).

As a result of the cuts, RNZ started a voluntary redundancy scheme and made changes to its programming (Hu, 2025a). The youth platform *TAHI* was to be shut down from 6 November as part of the cost cutting. The cinema programme *At the Movies* would be dropped from the radio schedule and become a podcast. The music review show *Sunday Sampler* has been folded into *Music 101* and *Culture 101* intends to drop one of its two presenters (RNZ, 2025i)

These and other changes are part of what RNZ Chief Executive Paul Thompson described as a “different approach” to gaining and maintaining listenership. The goal is to reach 500,000 listeners by November 2006 and a further 20,000 at the end of 2027. The intended target audience is described as “broadly 50-69, male and female,” and “growing the audience in Auckland” is an important part of the overall strategy to cut costs and increase audience numbers (Peacock, 2025b).

The target audience and Auckland focus strategies are found in the report commissioned by Paul Thompson and written by Richard Sutherland, a former head of RNZ news. Entitled “RNZ National Turnaround Strategy,” this report aroused much commentary on the roles and purpose of RNZ and broadcasting generally in the digital present. Some viewed the report as exposing RNZ as a moribund, irrelevant institution beset with sliding listenership, while others read it as an opportunity for developing new approaches and audiences (McGregor, 2025) Some point out that RNZ’s decline in radio listenership needs to be placed in the context of its rapidly growing online audiences and content-sharing schemes as well as the idea that numbers/ratings alone fail to capture audience diversity and how well the RNZ Charter goals are being met (Peter Thompson, 2025).

Simple ratings numbers are something of a blunt instrument in terms of assessing public media performance but are important as giving some idea of audience engagement and responses. RNZ's numbers have been slipping over the last five years from a high of 600,000 listeners weekly. However, the latest GfK survey showed a rise for the first time in three years for both National and Concert (Peacock, 2025c). And perhaps even more importantly as a measure of RNZ's importance in the current climate of epistemological confusion is that it emerged as the country's most trustworthy media brand in the authoritative annual *Trust in News* survey of 2025 (Donaldson, 2025).

7. Podcasts

Thomas Watts and Danielle Selman Julian

Podcasting is included in this report for the first time because it represents a rapidly expanding component of the Aotearoa environment, with growing cultural and media-industry influence (NZ On Air, 2024; Tennant, 2024). The term 'podcast' functions both as a noun and a verb, and the practice of podcasting occupies a liminal position between traditional radio, the creator economy and on-demand digital media (Berry, 2016; Bonini, 2022; Sharon, 2023). Unlike broadcast radio, podcasting operates through an on-demand, user-driven model that enables individuals and organisations to produce and distribute content targeted at audiences that would not typically attract traditional commercial investment (Berry, 2016; Bonini, 2022). These niche communities, combined with podcasting's characteristic one-to-one mode of address, contribute to a sense of intimacy that supports deeper forms of storytelling, learning and community building, offering a personalised experience seldom replicated by conventional broadcast formats (McHugh, 2016; Lindgren, 2021).

Podcast content is increasingly disseminated across social media through a multi-platform, transmediated approach, which expands audience reach by circulating audio in visual or text-based forms (Hilmes, 2013; Rime et al., 2022). This trend is evident in the rise of short video clips shared on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. They act as discovery tools for new listeners in environments where audio cannot be natively shared (Andok, 2025).

Podcast audience demographics

Mirroring the liminal and decentralised nature of podcasting outlined above, tracking ownership and influence within the sector is complex. Unlike traditional broadcast industries, podcasting operates within a fragmented and often opaque data environment where reliable, centralised audience metrics are limited or inaccessible (Morris, 2021). This challenge is particularly pronounced in New Zealand, where no industry standard ratings system exists to establish how many people are listening to podcasts or the reach they achieve at a national level (Tennant, 2024). As a result, building an understanding of listenership and ownership requires assembling a small patchwork of indicators to form an approximate picture of the sector.

The annual NZ On Air audience survey, *Where Are The Audiences*, identifies podcasting as continuing to grow year on year. The 2024 survey reported that daily podcast listenership has increased to 18 percent, up from 15 percent in 2023 (NZ On Air, 2024). Data from the *The Infinite Dial* survey reinforces this trend, indicating that 36 percent of New Zealanders are weekly podcast listeners and 55 percent listen monthly (Edison Research, 2025). Spotify remains the most widely used platform, while the popularity of Apple Podcasts and RNZ has dipped slightly over the past few years (NZ On Air, 2024).

Popular podcasts in New Zealand

What constitutes the most popular podcasts in New Zealand over the past 12 months largely depends on the measurement tool used. For this report, the past year of data from Podtrac's Podcast Tracker was examined, and the Wayback Machine was used to obtain archived screenshots of the Apple Podcasts (2025) charts along with the New Zealand rankings available on Radio.net. These sources frequently diverge. For instance, Podtrac lists *Mike Hosking's Breakfast* as consistently appearing within its Top 10 across the entire 12-month period, yet the programme does not appear among the upper tiers of the Apple Podcasts chart during the same timeframe.

The basis on which each platform constructs its Top 10 is not publicly specified. It is unclear whether rankings reflect downloads, unique listeners, time spent listening or some combination of metrics. It also is difficult to discern whether they measure performance across a show's full back catalogue or only recent episodes. As a result, the comparisons presented here should be understood as indicative rather than definitive, offering a snapshot of how different tracking systems represent podcast popularity.

Across these charts, several broad patterns emerge. Overseas programming dominates much of the year, with shows such as *The Joe Rogan Experience*, *The Mel Robbins Podcast*, *The Rest is History*, *The Rest is Politics*, and *Diary of a CEO* appearing frequently across the various rankings. True crime also features prominently. This includes major international cases, such as long running cold case series, *In the Dark* and *Casefile* and renewed interest linked to the Erin Patterson mushroom poisoning. Notable examples of New Zealand true crime podcasts include Stuff and the New Zealand Herald's week by week reporting on the Philip Polkinghorne trial, Newsroom's *Dwell* hosted by Melanie Reid, and the independently produced *Guilt* from Brevity Studios.

Another consistent feature of the New Zealand charts is the strong presence of radio shows repackaged in podcast form. These include ZM's *Fletch, Vaughan and Hayley*, Newstalk ZB's *Mike Hosking's Breakfast*, and Heather du Plessis-Allan's *Drive*. Alongside these sit a smaller number of local interview and conversational podcasts with sustained visibility, including *Between Two Beers* (NZME/iHeart), *The Dom Harvey Podcast* (originally associated with The Edge but now independent), and *The Morning Shift* (YouKnow Media), with Jordan River Vaha'akolo, formerly of Mai FM, alongside Brooke Ruscoe and 'Matua' Marc Peard.

Podcasting has been suggested as one possible way of addressing emerging gaps in the New Zealand broadcasting environment, a point that is touched on in Creative New Zealand's (2023) *New Mirrors* report. As noted in earlier editions of the JMAD Media Ownership report, the cancellation of current affairs television programmes and the closure of long-form journalistic magazines have created a noticeable void in the national media landscape. Podcasts appear to be filling parts of this gap, particularly in the realm of political commentary and public affairs, with legacy media using the format to extend their coverage (as seen in RNZ's *The Detail)*. Independent political podcasts such as *1 of 200*, *BHN*, *Three Gals One Beehive*, *The Bradbury Group* and *The Platform* likewise contribute to this expanded space for discussion by regularly interviewing prominent New Zealanders, including former and sitting politicians, academics and activists. Research from the United States suggests a comparable pattern internationally, with survey findings indicating that a key motivation for podcast listening is the desire to obtain new political information and engage with more personalised political perspectives (Bratcher, 2020).

At a symbolic level, it is also notable that the most substantial long-form interview completed by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in 2025 to date was on *The Dom Harvey Podcast*, where he spoke for over an hour. He also appeared on *The Morning Shift (*as noted, one of New Zealand's most popular podcasts). Alongside this, in November 2024, Luxon was interviewed in the second season of RNZ's *30* with Guyon Espiner. For comparison, the most recent long-form interview conducted within a traditional broadcast setting was Jack Tame's *Q+A* interview in December 2024.

These appearances illustrate how visually oriented podcasts now sit alongside conventional journalistic formats as sites where political narratives are crafted and circulated. They are also heavily remediated through social media. For example, while the YouTube upload of Luxon's interview on *The Dom Harvey Podcast* had approximately 14,000 views at the time of writing, short clips from the same conversation had accrued around 260,000 plays on TikTok. This comes with the caveat that audio listenership figures and viewership data from Facebook and Instagram remain unavailable, meaning the total reach of these interviews cannot be fully determined. This approach matches the American Presidential Election 2024, which was dubbed “The Podcast Election” by Oxford Road (2025), while both US current affairs magazine *The Week* (Mathis, 2024) and The United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney (Kalinauskas, 2024) have also published content about the impact of podcasts on campaigning. Examples include candidates making appearances on popular US podcasts that are outside of the directly political realm, such as Kamala Harris appearing on Alex Cooper’s *Call Her Daddy* and Donald Trump appearing on *The Joe Rogan Experience and The Past Weekend with Theo Von* (Carman, 2025).

The podcasting medium involves both established media organisations and independent producers distributing audio content to their audiences primarily via a range of platforms (i.e., Spotify and YouTube). As citizens’ trust in news from traditional news sources fluctuates (Myllylahti & Treadwell, 2025), news consumers turn to podcasts with content that overtly matches their ideology. Interestingly, Sang and colleagues’ (2023) global study suggests that in countries such as the United Kingdom, which has relatively higher press freedom, citizens consumed fewer news podcasts. They also found that in countries with less press freedom, podcasts are an important news source for media consumers who live in a more controlled news media environment. For New Zealand, this raises concerns about the shape and sustainability of the local podcasting landscape. Tennant (2024) echoes Bonini’s (2022) concern that increasing international involvement may amount to a kind of audio colonisation, with the potential to shape local sectors in ways that disadvantage local creators.

Profiles of the major players

According to NZME’s (2025a) annual report for the year ended 31 December 2024, digital audio revenue reached $10.8 million. Podcasts were a key growth driver for NZME, increasing revenue by 67 percent year on year. The company noted that their digital audio offerings had created expanding advertising opportunities (by consolidating streaming and ad-service infrastructure to offer precise targeting through improved data analytics from first and third parties.) The report also claimed that it owned “the leading podcast network in New Zealand” (p. 14). The country’s prominent networks are listed in Table 16.

Table 16: Prominent Podcast Networks in Aotearoa New Zealand

NAME	OWNER	Prominent Podcasts
Rova	Mediaworks	*Not for Radio*, *Giggly Squad*, *A Little Bit Extra with Sharyn Casey*, *DSPN – Devlin Sports Podcast Network*, *Duncan Garner*, *Editor in Chief*, *Where's My Money?*, *REX*
iHeartRadio	NZME	ZM Podcast Network. The Hits Podcast Network. The Coast Podcast Network. ZB: *NewstalkZBeen, Politics Central, News Fix*, *Ask Me Anything With Paula Bennett*, *The Leighton Smith Podcast*. The Alternative Commentary Collective
RNZ	Publicly owned radio station	*MediaWatch*, *The Detail*, *Nark, Search and Rescue*, *Voices from Antarctica*, *No Stupid Questions with Susan Edmunds*, *Context*
Stuff	Stuff	*Simon Bridges Generally Famous*, *Full Disclosure*, *Paddy Gower's TFN – The F#$%ing News*
Herald	NZME	*A Moment in Crime*, *Money Talks*, *The Front Page*, *The Elephant*, *The Little Things*, *The Prosperity Project*
The Spinoff Podcast Network	The Spinoff	The Fold, Gone By Lunchtime, When the Facts Change, Business is Boring, The Long Play
Brodie Kane Media	Brodie Kane Media	*Kiwi Yarns*, *The Girls Uninterrupted*, *Three Gals One Beehive*
Roar Collective		*Outside the Lanes with Sophie Pascoe*, *Well & Good with Art Green*, *What Matters Most*

Here, it is important to note that many New Zealand podcasts sit at the intersection of independent production and legacy media distribution. For instance, Brodie Kane Media produces the popular *The Girls Unfiltered* podcast, which is carried primarily by Stuff. There is also a history of collaboration between newsrooms in this space, such as Stuff and RNZ's joint involvement in *Black Hands* and *The White Silence*.

Questions of definition and measurement compound this complexity. The opacity of podcast categorisation and the unreliability of podcast audience metrics have been identified internationally as major barriers to further investment in the sector (Oxford Road, 2025). One ongoing focus is whether filmed conversational podcast-type content uploaded to YouTube constitutes a podcast at all. This ambiguity creates a media environment in which content occupies a liminal position between traditional broadcast and online platforms. The issue is currently playing out locally, with the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) examining the relationship between online radio outlet *The*

Platform and its own broadcast-focused regulatory framework (Greive, 2025b). From a policy perspective, the BSA has signalled an interest in extending its remit to cover certain forms of non-traditional broadcasting. While there is no immediate legal requirement for podcasters to comply with broadcast standards, Tennant's (2023) research on the self-imposed ethical practices of independent podcasters suggests an awareness of these emerging regulatory boundaries.

Concerns about the implications of limited oversight are reinforced by research from the United States. Rashul and colleagues (2025) found a relationship between unmoderated content on alternative, non-mainstream podcasts, the spread and acceptance of misinformation, and forms of contentious political participation. Despite the absence of editorial review, loyal listeners were reported to regard these podcasts as trustworthy sources of news, increasing the likelihood that they would believe and share possible misinformation.

Importantly, outside the chartable mainstream of Aotearoa's podcasting landscape, there exists a wide array of podcasts produced by business owners, journalists, religious groups, educators, NGOs, comedians and sometimes friends just recording their regular weekly catch up. These shows remain part of the broader ecosystem and reflect the increasing fragmentation of audiences, as well as the capacity for podcasters to cultivate highly specific communities. Podcasting also has growing potential as a direct-to-consumer marketing tool. Moe (2021) notes that parasocial relationships between hosts and listeners can be leveraged to deliver branded messages, a dynamic increasingly visible in local practice. Alongside traditional consumer partnerships, public sector agencies have also entered this space. In 2024, the Te Ara Ahunga Ora | Retirement Commission's (2024) Sorted.org produced the series *Sussed, Sorted, Shifting* as part of a wider content partnership with The Morning Shift.

Moe (2023) also reports increasing audience acceptance of commercial elements in podcasts produced outside of legacy media, as listeners recognise that sponsorships help sustain independent creators. Chen and Keng's (2023) research further suggests that such integrations are emerging as one of the most trusted forms of brand communication. Examples in the New Zealand context include the Alternative Commentary Collective's sponsorship arrangement with Export Beer, and *Business is Boring*'s partnership with Deel Inc. (a software-as-a-service provider). Another revenue model used by many independent podcasters is subscription-supported content via platforms such as Substack and Patreon. For example, the *History of Aotearoa New*

Zealand podcast has 109 paying members and earns approximately NZ$420 per month (Patreon, n.d.). While not a substitute for a living wage, this income is nonetheless a meaningful achievement in an independent podcasting landscape where many creators earn little or no ongoing revenue. This example highlights both the possibilities and limits of podcasting as a commercial medium, as even comparatively successful shows often require creators to maintain additional employment.

8. Print and Online

Greg Treadwell and Dannie Selman Julian

In 2025, Aotearoa New Zealand's print-and-online sector endured yet another turbulent year in the increasingly challenging news business. Major events included significant layoffs of journalists in NZME newsrooms, the launch of a live-streamed news show on nzherald.co.nz, and the sale of a 50 percent stake in Stuff's digital arm to Trade Me Ltd. Further, Stuff journalists took industrial action over a pay offer, and activist-investor pressure helped significantly reshape NZME's board and governance, (including the establishment of an editorial advisory board). Meanwhile, the nation's local news deserts continued to grow as major media companies shut down community news titles that they, or former versions of themselves, had acquired in more profitable times. Other significant events in 2025 included out-of-court settlements between the *National Business Review* and three major corporates after a limited number of NBR subscriptions were shared widely among corporate staff. Negotiations are understood to be going on with the IRD and NBR over the same issue (Currie, 2025k). Also making news, in late 2025 the New Zealand Broadcast Standards Authority provisionally agreed to consider a standard-based complaint from a member of the public against The Platform, an online-only publisher. The move raised fierce debate, with some accusing the regulator of a power grab and others defending it as doing an appropriate job.

New Zealand's print and online news duopoly

In 2025, Stuff and NZME remain, in effect, a powerful news duopoly in Aotearoa New Zealand. Stuff Group Ltd owns Stuff Masthead Publishing Ltd, which publishes influential daily mastheads with websites, including *The Post, The Press* and *The Waikato Times.* It also owns half of Stuff Digital, which publishes stuff.co.nz and produces *ThreeNews*, having sold half this year. NZME Ltd, outside its radio and other interests, is also publisher of the *New Zealand Herald* and six other daily newspapers, as well as leading news site nzherald.co.nz. The two companies were discussing print-and-online asset sales between them this year when a takeover bid of NZME's board of directors took place—the talks were paused, then scuttled. While these two major players still dominate the nation's strong print-and-online market for news, their enduring duopoly should be understood against a background in which global platform giants now dominate the advertising markets that once supported publishers of public-interest news. Despite their relative size locally, Stuff and NZME have for many years now had to survive a market takeover that began when social-media advertising began to dominate.

Stuff Group Ltd

stuff.co.nz, part of Stuff Digital, continues to be the country's most-visited news site (SEMrush, 2025) with 3.6 percent year-on-year growth reported in October 2025 (Stoppers Team, 2025e). Stuff's Masthead Publishing sites at the same time reported reaching one million unique viewers, having launched in 2023. The Masthead division includes Stuff's daily metropolitan and *Sunday Star Times* newspapers and its paywalled websites. Managing director Joanna Norris said the results reflected a demand for quality journalism and the increasing prominence of *The Post* (formerly *The Dominion Post*) as a national news brand with a focus on business and political news analysis (Stoppers Team, 2025d).

In March 2025, NZME announced it had been in talks with Stuff to buy an unspecified number of its newspapers and websites. This would, according to NZME, grow the audience for its One Roof real-estate platform. Stuff, however, had paused the talks, pending the outcome of an attempted takeover of the NZME board (RNZ, 2025b), According to an NZME statement. Talks did not resume, the impact of the NZME takeover bid is discussed in detail below.

Meanwhile, a notice to the New Zealand Companies Office in February 2025 forewarned that shares in Stuff Digital would change from a single-share holding, held by owner Sinead Boucher, to a holding of 1 million shares (Currie, 2025e). Then, in early June, it was announced the online marketplace Trade Me was buying a 50 percent stake in Stuff Digital for an undisclosed sum. Stuff's digital division is the publisher of Aotearoa New Zealand's most visited news site, free-to-access stuff.co.nz, as well as being provider of *The News* to TV3. The deal between Stuff and Trade Me saw the latter's branding for motoring and property adopted on stuff.co.nz; Stuff's property section is now Trade Me Property. After the sale, Stuff owner Sinead Boucher said the sale would allow Stuff to invest in technology and talent for the future (RNZ, 2025e). Editorial independence and integrity were intrinsic to Stuff, and Trade Me, she said, was committed to upholding Stuff's code of ethics and practice. Trade Me chief executive Anders Skoe said the deal would enable people selling homes to reach a wider pool of buyers, while providing purchasers with "every resource to navigate the property market with confidence" (RNZ, 2025e). Stuff took over providing TV3 with its nightly news bulletin in April 2024, after the sudden closure of Mediaworks (Edmunds, 2024). Boucher, a former journalist, was chief executive when she bought Stuff from its Australian owners Nine Entertainment for $1 in 2020 (Treadwell & Hope, 2021, p. 46). On July 4, 2025, Stuff announced the closure of its remaining Auckland community newspapers: *Central Leader, Western Leader, North Shore Times, Manukau & Papakura Courier, Rodney Times* and *Franklin County News*. Derek Whaley (2025), lead of the Research and Heritage Services Team for Auckland Council wrote the following for The Spinoff:

> the cancellation of Stuff's seven remaining Auckland titles marks a major turning point in community journalism. The supercity has not had as few newspapers as today since the 1850s. While some local newspapers survive, such as the Hibiscus and Kahurangi Matters, the Devonport Flagstaff, the Eastern and Franklin Times, and the West Franklin Breeze, these are exceptions rather than the rule. No newspapers now represent great swaths of Auckland, from Helensville to Manurewa and Piha to Glendower.

In August, another Stuff title, the *Marlborough Express (MEX)* shifted to become an online-only publication (Allen, 2025). Editor Ian Allen called this a new chapter for the 160-year-old title. Meanwhile, its free sister papers, including the *Weekend Express* edition, will continue to be printed and circulated (Peacock, 2025a). Former editor Nicola Coburn told *Media watch* she thought the shift from print to digital was "inevitable", and it had long been known readers were turning away from newspapers. There was also the feasibility of producing a printed paper and having it delivered. "It's very expensive," she said.

Meanwhile, more than 150 unionised journalists at Stuff walked off the job and picketed the company's offices on August 28. Staff said the strike was in response to a low pay-offer and real wages going backwards after years of undervaluing of journalists, especially given the recent sale to Trade Me (Hu, 2025b). The E Ut union said the problem was also the company's proposal to split the workforce's collective agreement into two, one for digital staff and one for print mastheads (Edmunds, 2025), which it said was an attempt to divide the workforce (E Ut, 2025b). In response, Stuff said pay rises had been awarded every year since the pandemic and denied there had been any "secret payday" for executives after the sale to Trade Me (RNZ, 2025h).

New Zealand Media and Entertainment Ltd (NZME).

Alongside Stuff, NZME also dominates the local print-and-online news market, publishing nzherald.co.nz, the *New Zealand Herald* and five other North Island daily papers: the *Bay of Plenty Times, Hawkes Bay Today,* the *Northern Advocate, Rotorua Daily Post* and the *Whanganui Chronicle.* It also owns approximately half the country's radio stations, including flagship station Newstalk ZB, the One Roof property platform, which is integrated on its nzherald.co.nz site, and business-news site Business Desk. In late 2024, it announced the closure of 14 community newspapers (Treadwell, 2024). In March 2025, it acquired full ownership of the *Gisborne Herald* and bought Sun Media's three Bay of Plenty print publications—*The Weekend Sun*, *Coast & Country News* and *New Farm Dairies*—as well as its successful local-news website, Sun Live. In January 2025, NZME announced a major restructuring of its newsrooms, which it said would see 38 editorial roles cut from the New Zealand Herald, Business Desk and Newstalk ZB. In February, NZME revised that down to 30 but said it would make these targeted savings, reported by the *National Business Review* to be $4 million (Pointon, 2025a), by also reducing the number of contractors and casuals it engaged. Voluntary redundancy packages were reportedly taken by such high-profile journalists as political editor Claire Trevett, science journalist Jamie Morton, deputy business editor Grant Bradley and senior sports journalist Chris Rattue (Acoria & Donnell, 2025). The proposals included a further reduction in the number of production journalists and the establishment of journalistic "desks" for areas of focus such as live news, business, sport and politics. Editor-at-large Shayne Currie (2025a), once the Herald's managing editor, wrote in his Media Insider column that the job cuts were the biggest reorganization of the Herald newsroom in a decade and the number of full-time NZME editorial roles would drop to about 250.

In February, NZME announced plans for a live-streamed news show to be hosted by broadcaster Ryan Bridge, and in May it launched Herald Now, two-hours of free, ad-supported video news on weekday mornings. In late September, NZME said Herald Now had attracted 2.4 million views during July. Clips from the show had had more than 15.7 million views across TikTok, Instagram and Facebook in its first two months, which showed there was "significant demand from audiences for high-quality video news content and premium journalism" (NZME, 2025f).

In early March, a challenge from an activist-shareholder started a chain of events that would lead to a major shake-up of the NZME board of directors, including a change of chair. It was revealed through stock-exchange filings and media reports that

Canadian-born investor and billionaire Jim Grenon had, via his company JTG 4 Ltd, built a stake of approximately 9.3% in NZME. Grenon wrote to board members, saying he wanted to get rid of all but one of them, and bring in four new directors, including himself (Currie, 2025b). The other three would be lawyer and blogger Philip Crump, businessman Des Gittings and retail executive Simon West, he said. Grenon was reported saying, in an 11-page letter to the board, they wanted

> NZME to be a good place to work, and to have pride in its product, but the drive to make money for the shareholders is going to be notched up. The emphasis on social leadership will be notched down. The objective is to act like an owner-operator. (Currie, 2025b)

1News reported that Grenon claimed at that time to have support from shareholders representing 37 percent of the company's shares. The E Ut union, which represents, among others, unionized journalists, raised concerns about undue influence the new board might exert on editorial policies in NZME's newsrooms (E Ut, 2025a). Media commentator Dr Gavin Ellis, himself a former editor-in-chief of the *New Zealand Herald*, called for an immediate explanation to the public of Grenon's intentions at NZME (Ellis, 2025). In a second letter to shareholders, Grenon said shareholders supporting his proposed cleanout of the board now owned almost 50 percent of shares.

At the end of March, NZME's directors responded, delaying the company's annual shareholders meeting, scheduled for April, until June. They told shareholders they had concerns whether Grenon's proposals were "in the best interests of the company and its shareholders" (Currie, 2025c). Among their concerns was Grenon "gaining editorial control", that a minority shareholder would have too much power, and that poor governance might follow. In a letter from the board, chair Barbara Chapman said while the board acknowledged it was ultimately responsible for the quality of NZME's journalism, it was "very against the board interfering with editorial independence" (Currie, 2025c). In the six-page letter, she said:

> There are clear global examples of politically driven or high-net-worth individual ownership resulting in adverse financial outcomes for media businesses. We are concerned that the proposal is a play by Mr. Grenon to exercise control over a newsroom, rather than anything else. (Currie, 2025c).

The board also released to NZX a letter Grenon had written suggesting a different board structure from the one he first proposed was possible; he also included that resistance was ultimately "futile" (RNZ, 2025c). However, by the postponed shareholders' meeting in June, a compromise emerged. Chapman, in the last year of her term on the board, would vacate the seat early for former National Party Cabinet Minister Steven Joyce. Jim Grenon would get a seat as a non-independent member on the board, which would include existing independent board members Carol Campbell, Sussan Turner and Guy Horrocks. They would be joined by Bowen Pan, a technology and marketplace expert. Two of Grenon's board nominees would have advisory roles, including Philip Crump taking a role on an "editorial board" advising newsrooms. Grenon told the *NZ Herald* he was very happy with the outcome and had learnt a lot about New Zealand thinking during the process (Currie, 2025d). The editorial board will be chaired by Miriana Alexander, the former head of premium content at the *Herald* and former editor of both the *Weekend Herald* and *Herald on Sunday* (NZ Herald, 2025a). Other editorial board members, along with Crump and Alexander, will be Josi Pagani, a political commentator and chief executive of Child fund NZ, and a former chief sub-editor at both *The Dominion* and *Sunday Star Times*, Brent Webbing.

In other executive changes at NZME this year, Renata Hayward, who was regional head–northern commercial, became the chief commercial officer–direct, and Greg McCrea was made chief commercial officer–agency, having previously held the role of commercial director–agency and strategic accounts (NZME, n.d.a). In coming changes, Jo Hempstead will replace David Mackrell as chief finance officer in January 2026 (Currie, 2025j).

NZME is a publicly owned company listed on both the New Zealand (NZX) and Australian (ASX) stock markets. In half-year results ending June 2025, it reported operating earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of $23.9 million and an after-tax loss of $393,000. Its board declared an interim dividend of 3c a share. The company posted an operating revenue of $165.7m for the six months to June 30, down 3 percent from the same period in 2024.

The company's publishing platforms include *The New Zealand Herald,* nzherald.co.nz, a mobile app, the Saturday edition *Weekend Herald*, and the Sunday edition *Herald on Sunday.* Magazines inserted into these publications include *OneRoof Property* on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays (connecting to the oneroof.co.nz website), *Viva* on Wednesdays, *Time Out* and *Travel on Thursdays*, with *Driven Car Guide* (connected to drivencarguide.co.nz) and lifestyle magazine *Canvas* on Saturdays (NZME.co.nz, n.d.c). Subscription-based website *BusinessDesk.co.nz* has been owned by NZME since 2021.

NZME's regional newspapers include the *Bay of Plenty Times*, the *Northern Advocate, Rotorua Daily Post, Hawkes Bay Today* and *Whanganui Chronicle.* Its community and rural titles, a mix of online and print news brands, include the *Northland Age, Waikato Herald, Gisborne Herald, The Country, Education Gazette, SunLive,* the *Weekend Sun* and *Coast & Country News.*

The NZ Herald has been the Auckland region's newspaper since it was founded in 1863 by William Chisholm Wilson (Roughan, 2013). For much of the 20th century it was owned by prominent Pākehā business families, and before its financialisation in the 1990s, famously by the Wilson and Horton families. In 1996, it was bought by Irish businessman Tony O'Reilly's Independent News and Media Ltd, and then by APN News and Media Ltd in 2010, which rebranded as NZME Ltd in 2014.

Newspaper readership

Market research company Roy Morgan's mid-2025 readership estimates show that 2.7 million New Zealanders read newspapers over a 7-day period, while more than 1.6 million New Zealanders read magazines over a 7-day period (see Table 17). Meanwhile, Nielsen Research 2025 readership figures for the year from July 2024 to June 2025 show print readership figures are falling across the top 10 mastheads, while there is growth for most in total cross-platform audience figures.

Table 17: Newspaper readership in New Zealand, 12 months to June 2025

	Print		Digital (web or app)		Total cross-platform audience (print, web or app)		
	June 2024 (000s)	June 2025 (000s	June 2024 (000s)	June 2025 (000s)	June 2024 (000s)	June 2025 (000s)	% change in TCPA
New Zealand Herald	446	445	1,507	1,625	1,716	1,812	+5.6%
The Post	138	137	221	269	329	355	+7.9%
Otago Daily Times	90	88	215	252	267	304	+13.9%
The Press	131	108	189	195	264	267	+1.1%
Waikato Times	65	52	124	155	176	197	+11.9%
Hawke's Bay Today	44	54	96	156	121	193	+59.5%
Sunday Star-Times	140	118	64	74	194	182	-6.2%
Bay of Plenty Times	39	52	92	132	120	168	+40.0%
Northern Advocate	37	57	99	121	116	157	+35.3%
Taranaki Daily News	44	35	97	100	118	125	+5.9%

Source: Roy Morgan, 2025c. Cross-platform audience is the number of New Zealanders who have read or accessed individual newspaper content via print or online. Print is net readership in an average seven days. Online is net readership online in an average seven days.

In November 2025, Nielsen Research released the readership figures for September 2024–September 2025. *Media Insider* (Currie, 2025k) reported the following statistics of print readership for the Metropolitan newspapers. See Table 18.

Table 18: Metropolitan Newspaper readership in New Zealand, 12 months to September 2025

Newspaper Print Title	Metropolitan newspaper readerships (000s) for the 12 months to 30 September 2025
New Zealand Herald	503
Herald on Sunday	308
Sunday Star Times	191
The Post	112
The Press	90
The Otago Daily Times	87
Waikato Times	55

Source: *Nielsen CMI Q4 24-Q3 25 Sep 25* as cited in Currie (2025k).

Media Insider (Currie, 2025k) also noted the "NZ Herald's daily brand audience (digital and print) is up year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter to 1.181 million and its weekly brand audience is 2.37 million, an increase of 96,000 compared with last year."

StopPress Team (2025c) reported Stuff Group's Masthead Publications showed significant growth year-on-year, with digital and print publications *The Post*, *The Press* and the *Waikato Times* now being read by almost 1.5 million New Zealanders each month—a 26 percent increase year on year. Stuff Masthead Publishing Managing Director Joanna Norris credited investment in editorial, saying: "The Post has grown its Auckland senior editorial team in recent months, including with new Auckland editor, investigations specialist Steve Kilgallon." In September, Stuff Masthead Publishing subscriber sites reached one million unique viewers for the first time since their launch two-years ago (Scoop, 2025b). According to the same press release, stuff.co.nz, Stuff Group's un-paywalled digital news website, remains the country's largest news website with 3.6 percent year-on-year growth, and attributes the following quote to Stuff Digital Managing Director Nigel Tutt saying it was "a myth that New Zealanders are turning to global platforms for news, with the word 'Stuff' often appearing in Google Search's top three terms."

Independent news organisations

Independent newspapers.

Private ownership of Stuff since 2020, when it was offloaded by its Australian owners for $1 to then-chief executive Sinead Boucher, has meant its national and regional titles, such as the *Sunday-Star Times* and the *Press*, have considerably bolstered the nominally independent print-and-online sector. However, beyond their central presence are still longstanding companies such as Dunedin's Allied Media Ltd (formerly Allied Press Ltd) and Beacon Printing and Publishing Co Ltd, as well as a variety of other independent newspapers surviving in Aotearoa New Zealand despite the difficult economic conditions for news media and regular closures.

South Island

In July 2025, Allied Press Ltd rebranded to Allied Media Ltd to reflect a broadened print-plus-digital strategy (Otago Daily Times, 2025). The company, owners of the *Otago Daily Times* and a stable of community and regional papers, has long been a stalwart of local independent ownership. It publishes the *Otago Daily Times* and a stable of regional and community newspapers, including *The Star* (Christchurch), *The Star* (Dunedin), *Mountain Scene, The News (Central Otago), North Canterbury News, Southland Express, Central Rural Life, Southern Rural Life, The Courier* (Timaru), *The Ensign* (Gore), *Clutha Leader*, *Hokitika Guardian, Oamaru Mail, Bay Harbour News, Selwyn Times* and the *Wanaka Sun*. Allied Media is owned by Fraser Smith Holdings Ltd, a holding company owned mostly by Sir Julian Smith and his family, longtime owners of Allied Press. Its chief executive is Grant McKenzie, who now owns 25 percent. Meanwhile, the *Ashburton Guardian* survives as an independent newspaper. It was owned by members of the Bell family from 1900 to 2025. Fifth-generation owner Simon Bell this year sold his shares to co-owner Daryl Holden, who is also its managing editor (Sandys, 2025). The family-owned *Westport News* has published West Coast news since the 1870s. It is owned by Lee Scanlon, a long-term journalist at the paper, and her husband, Kevin Scanlon. The *News* began its life as the *Buller News*, a political organ for its owner, the unsuccessful politician Eugene O'Conor (RNZ, 2023). In 2017, the Scanlons bought the business from Colin Warren and Mary Warren, who had owned it for 40 years. In the north-west of the South Island, Top South Media Ltd own a stable of independent publications: the *Nelson Weekly*, the *Waimea Weekly*, the *Guardian Motueka and Golden Bay*, the *Marlborough Weekly* and *Top South Farming*. It also publishes lifestyle publications *Nelson Magazine, Marlborough Magazine* and *Best Life.*

North Island

The *Whakatane Beacon* and the *Ōpōtiki News* continue to be owned by the Beacon Printing and Publishing Co Ltd, first incorporated in 1939. The *Bay of Plenty Beacon* (later renamed the *Whakatane Beacon*) was founded by the late Leicester Spring, and the company is still owned, to a large extent, by the Spring family. Among 18 shareholdings, 21% is now owned by NZME Ltd. Its listed directors are Leo Spring and John Spring; the latter is also its longstanding managing director. Long associated with the printing and publishing of community newspapers, today the company also owns Beacon Print Ltd and Beacon Print Hawkes Bay Ltd. In 2024, it sold the *Waitomo News*, now the *King Country News* to Good Local Media Ltd, which also owns the *Cambridge News, King Country News* and the *Te Awamutu News,* as well as monthly inserts *King Country Farmer* and *Country Life*, and the monthly *Waikato Business News. The Raglan News* and *Chatter News* are both owned by proprietors Jacqui and David Smith.

In September 2024, the Tātou Tātou o Te Wairoa iwi trust bought the *Wairoa Star/Te Whetu o te Wairoa,* which was under threat of closure. The acquisition is believed to make the *Wairoa Star/Te Whetu o te Wairoa* the first iwi-owned, paid-for newspaper in Aotearoa New Zealand (Peacock, 2024). Other North Island independents include *Hibiscus Matters* (Hibiscus Coast), a fortnightly free community newspaper published by Local Matters Ltd, a locally owned media company, which also publishes *Mahurangi Matters* and *Mangawhai News. Pohutukawa Coast Times* is a free weekly compact, locally owned and serving the Pohutukawa Coast. Also independent is the *Franklin Times*, now published by Times Media Ltd, an East Auckland company founded in 1972; it was owned for many years by community-news stalwarts Brian and Reay Neben, who sold it in 2024 to a local politician, Bo Burns. Burns was formerly an ACT Party parliamentary candidate for the Botany electorate and deputy chair of the Howick Local Board. In 2025, she was elected to the Auckland Council. Times Media also publishes *The Eastern Times* (Howick and Pakuranga), the result of a recent merger between the longstanding *Howick and Pakuranga Times* and a sister publication, *East Life*.

Beyond these examples are the privately owned independents from *Akaroa Mail* (owner/editor Michael de Hamel) to Waiheke Island's longstanding weekly *Gulf News* (owner Liz Waters) and other members of the New Zealand Community Newspapers Association ([NZCNA], n.d.). *The Rangitoto Observer*, which helped fill a void on Auckland's North Shore left by the closure of the *North Shore Times*, was launched in

2019 as a sister paper to *The Devonport Flagstaff*. Both the *Observer* and the *Flagstaff* are owned by Devonport Publishing Ltd, whose shareholders are longstanding Flagstaff editor Rob Drent, Johanna Hammer and Peter Wilson.

Scoop. Scoop Publishing Limited, whose sole director is journalist Alastair Thompson, is a social enterprise wholly owned by the Scoop Foundation for Public Interest Journalism, a not-for-profit charitable trust established in 2015 (Scoop Foundation, n.d.). The foundation funds projects that uphold independent reporting, democracy and public education on media literacy and journalistic ethics.

Asia Pacific Report. AsiaPacificReport.nz is a joint venture between Multimedia Investments Ltd, founded by investigative journalist Selwyn Manning, and retired journalism professor David Robie's Café Pacific Media. It is published in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Media Network | Te Koakoa Inc. ([APMN], n.d.), a collective of journalists, academics, researchers and community activists in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. The site was founded in 2016 to publish Asia-Pacific content following a 2009-2016 joint venture between Robie, Manning and scoop.co.nz.

Crux. A not-for-profit news site covering Queenstown, Wanaka and Cromwell in the Southern Lakes region, Crux was initially proposed as a model for a network of up to 17 regional news services covering under-reported regional communities across the country. However, Crux's founder and managing editor, journalist and television producer Peter Newport, announced in late 2024 that Crux would stop publishing with immediate effect, having "tried, tested and implemented every single type of digital publishing innovation" (Newport, 2024). Newport's coverage of issues in the Southern Lakes then moved to Substack but returned in 2025 as a web-based site, with paid and non-paid subscriptions, a Facebook page and an optional subscription to its Substack newsletter. Substack is also the platform on which economics journalist Bernard Hickey has successfully built a subscriber base for his daily analysis of economics news, The Kākā.

"Anti-establishment" media

While left-oppositional media curators and commentators such as Martyn Bradbury (*The Daily Blog*) have been around for more than a decade now, the post-COVID period has seen the growth of alternative "anti-establishment" media (Greive, 2023) in Aotearoa New Zealand, as it has elsewhere around the Western world.

The Platform. Among leading online identities in Aotearoa New Zealand is The Platform, a web-based radio service focused on free speech and the defeat of what it calls "left-wing woke culture". Its frontline presenter is former Radio New Zealand journalist and former Magic Talk presenter Sean Plunket. In late 2025, news emerged that the New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority (NZBSA), which has statutory authority, had made a provisional decision to consider a complaint it had received from a member of the public against The Platform, despite the authority historically regulating traditional broadcasters like radio and television stations. Plunket's blunt rejection of the authority of the NZBSA—and that he would go to war over the issue—quickly drew support from the leaders of New Zealand First and the ACT Party, the two minor parties in the Coalition Government, as well as from other anti-establishment media. Businessman Troy Bowker, who supported Jim Grenon in his attempt to overthrow the board of NZME Ltd, publicly offered to fund The Platform's legal fight with the NZBSA (Currie, 2025i). David Harvey, a retired judge and former University of Auckland media-law lecturer, also rejected the NZBSA's position that it could regulate The Platform, a proposal that would open a can of worms and might even capture individuals livestreaming on social media (Sowman-Lund, 2025). However, according to Steven Price, a barrister specialising in media law and a teaching fellow at Victoria University of Wellington | Te Herenga Waka, the NZBSA was "just doing its job" (Price, 2025). The definition of broadcasting in the Broadcasting Act 1989, he explained,

> seems clearly to include an internet-based station that livestreams to a large audience. It does not include podcasters that require downloads. It doesn't include videos posted on YouTube for download. It doesn't include anyone on the internet who's not livestreaming to a public audience. (Price, 2025)

Price noted that The Platform billed itself as an "independent media organisation focused on developing open and reasoned exchange," which entirely fitted with the purpose of the Broadcasting Act. "It's conducting the same functions, serving the same good, and creating the same potential harms as NewsTalk [ZB]. Why wouldn't it be subject to the same standards – like accuracy, fairness, and privacy?" (Price, 2025). NZBSA Chief Executive Stacey Wood said:

> Our view is that online broadcasters that resemble traditional TV or radio stations clearly fall within the scope of the Act. We do not believe individuals livestreaming via their social media accounts can be considered broadcasters as defined by the Act. (Sowman-Lund, 2025)

Plunket founded The Platform in September 2021 with the financial backing of rich-lister Wayne Wright Jr. The businessman had become disillusioned with mainstream media during the pandemic, viewing its relationship with the government at the time as "all too cosy" (Greive, 2022). In March 2025, Wright, the majority shareholder, sold his stake in the business Plunket (Greive, 2025a)

Reality Check Radio. Meanwhile, Reality Check Radio (RCR), a web radio station emerging from the anti-vaccination and anti-COVID-19-mandate movements, continues to publish, having closed for financial reasons in 2024 and then reopening after appeals for financial support. RCR's hosts have faced scrutiny (McConnell, 2024) for providing a platform for controversial figures such as Austrian far-right activist Martin Sellner. Sellner is known to have been in email contact with, and welcomed a donation from, an Australian terrorist who later murdered 51 people in a machine-gun attack on worshippers at two Christchurch mosques in 2019. Founded by the group Voices for Freedom, which is associated with right-wing conspiracy theories (Stuff Circuit, 2022), RCR was banned from Facebook in July 2021 for publishing disinformation (Fisher, 2021). An Advertising Standards Authority ruling in June required the station to retract an advertisement containing unsubstantiated vaccine claims (Wilkinson, 2024). RCR professes to "challenge the medical dictatorship thrust upon New Zealanders under the guise of a pandemic response" (Voices for Freedom, n.d.).

The Centrist. The sole director and shareholder of The Centrist, an alternative news-curation and commentary site, is former Canadian rapper Tameem Adam Abdul-majeed Barakat, who in a 2008 interview admitted he had some admiration for discredited US conspiracy theorist Alex Jones (Mack, 2008). According to BusinessDesk (Dunkley & McNabb, 2023), the site, and a former sister site, NZNewsessentials, have been associated with Jim Grenon, who led the boardroom takeover at NZME Ltd in 2025 discussed earlier. The Canadian businessman, who moved to New Zealand in 2012, was initially registered as director of The Centrist. The Centrist's registered office is the office of accountancy firm BDO in Graham Street Auckland, the same address used by Grenon's holding companies in New Zealand (Dunkley & McNabb, 2023).

Magazines

Magazines in Aotearoa New Zealand also continued to experience real uncertainty in 2025. On 10 July, Are Media, publisher of multiple popular New Zealand magazines, announced it was being put up for sale by owners Mercury Capital, based in Sydney. Staff were alerted via an email from Chief Executive Jane Huxley (StopPress Team, 2025b). At the time of writing, Mercury Capital is still in ownership according to the Companies' Office. The suite of titles owned by Are Media were previously owned by Bauer Media, until the German company suddenly exited the New Zealand market in April 2020, citing COVID-19 restrictions (Treadwell & Selman Julian, 2024). Magazines included *New Zealand Listener, New Zealand Woman's Weekly, Woman's Day, Kia Ora Magazine* and *Your Home and Garden,* which returned to supermarket shelves in 2023. Are Media NZ directors include Stuart Dick, Tony Edwards, Jane Huxley and Marena Paul. Are Media reported strong growth in the Nielsen Q3 2025 Readership release: total readership for their titles reached 1,935,000, an increase of 23,000 readers for the quarter, and 128,000 over the past 12 months (StopPress Team, 2025g). Are Media have also engaged in a new partnership with People Inc., which extends advertisers' access to New Zealand audiences engaging with global media brands such as people.com and allrecipes.com. The partnership is said to have extended the company's digital reach, which StopPress (2025g) notes now exceeds 1.5 million unique visitors.

Former *NZ Woman's Weekly* deputy editor Kelly Bertrand founded an online magazine, *Capsule* (capsulenz.com), in 2020. Now, in 2025, the site is co-edited by Bertrand and Alice O'Connell. Simon Farrell-Green, former editor of *Home*, set up the architecture magazine *Here* (thisishere.nz). Four new lifestyle titles—*Woman*, *Haven*, *Scout* and *Thrive*—were launched by School Road Publishing in November 2020. School Road Publishing continues to own current-affairs magazine *North & South,* though, as noted above, publication of the magazine has halted. In 2025, *North & South* operates as a website with a monthly newsletter. There were plans to relaunch the print edition of the magazine; however, on 17 October 2025 the *NZ Herald's Media Insider* column suggested that the plans were halted, with owner Greg Partington quoted saying: "I'm just not satisfied that the revenues are there" (Currie, 2025i). In late 2023, Elcoat Media, owned by Andres McDaid, Sarah Murray and Stephen McDaid, bought *Fashion Quarterly* from Parkside Media, which owns a suite of car-interest magazines. Allied Media Ltd is publisher of several South Island community interest magazines: *Rugby News, Classic Driver, Kiwi Gardener*, and the lifestyle magazine *03* (Allied Press Magazines, n.d.). Stuff Group Ltd also has a stable of magazines, including *TV Guide*, *NZ House & Garden* and *NZ Gardener*, as well as weekend-paper inserts *Sunday* and *Your Weekend*.

Table 19 Weekly magazines average issue readership

Magazine Title	CMI Q3 24-Q2 25 000s (% of potential population)
The New Zealand Listener	213 (4.9%)
The New Zealand Woman's Weekly	431 (9.9%)
The TV Guide	281 (6.5%)
Woman's Day	342 (7.9%)

Source: Nielsen Magazine Readership Report for Q3 2024 – Q2 2025

SCG Media, a component of Soar Communication Group, publishes titles including *Dish, Good* and *NZ Marketing,* as well as industry news website StopPress (SCG Media, n.d.). Soar Communications Group's shareholders include members of the Soar family, and the directors are Frederick Soar and David Atkins, according to the New Zealand Companies Register. In August, StopPress reported Justine Jamieson had been appointed editor-at-large of *Good* magazine to shift its focus to building a community-centred brand and fostering collaborations with experts (Murray, 2024).

When Bauer quit Aotearoa New Zealand, *Metro Magazine*—published since 1981—was rescued by Simon Chesterton, who had previously co-founded and then sold Rugby Pass, a sports technology firm. In 2023 it was sold to family-owned Auckland investment company Still. In October 2025, it was announced that editor Henry Oliver had penned his last editorial for *Metro*—following seven years as editor—after Oliver and food-editor Charlotte Muru-Lanning were made redundant (Chapman, 2025). These redundancies resulted in the resignation of the designer and commercial manager. Sam Johnson, Metro's chairperson, told *NZ Herald* that guest editors would be contracted until the magazine could financially support full-time staff again to which *The Spinoff* editor, Madeleine Chapman, commented, a "guest editor" is not a "real job" and is the "print equivalent of an *SNL* host."

New Zealand Geographic, under the editorship of Catherine Woulfe, holds a special place in the world of New Zealand natural history and environment journalism. It is published by Kōwhai Media Ltd, which is owned by James Frankham, Mary Frankham and Brian Aitken. Its sole director is James Frankham. Among other celebrated titles, *Your Ex* (formerly *Express)* magazine has been published for Aotearoa's gay men and other LGBQT+ communities for almost three decades now. It claims to be New Zealand's only LGBTI+ magazine and identifies gay males aged

16 to 44 years as its primary target audience. Secondary audiences include older gay males plus bisexual, lesbian and transgender persons (Your Ex, n.d.). Started as an A4 photocopied pamphlet in 1992 (Your Ex, n.d.), it is now published via a website, a national monthly magazine (printed and online), and through a social media presence. *Your Ex* is published by TMO Publications Ltd, which is owned equally between editor Oliver Hall and business manager Matthew Fistonich, both listed directors of the company.

Table 20: Monthly magazine average issue readership

Magazine Title	CMI Q3 23-Q2 24 000s (% of potential population)
Kia ora	455 (10.4%)
Kiwi Gardener	123 (2.8%)
MiNDFOOD	231 (5.3%)
NZ House & Garden	380 (8.7%)
New Zealand Gardener	255 (5.9%)
New Zealand Trucking	88 (1.8%)
North & South	134 (3.1%)
Reader's Digest	245 (5.6%)
Rugby News	172 (4.0%)
The Australian Women's Weekly (NZ)	356 (8.2%)
Your Home and Garden	115 (2.6%)

Source: Nielsen Magazine Readership Report for Q3 2024 – Q2 2025

Fashion and luxury goods online magazine *Ensemble* announced its closure in October 2025, after being launched in 2020 by Zoe Walker Ahwa and Rebecca Wadey (Ensemble, n.d.). Elsewhere *MiNDFOOD* and its sister publication *STYLE* are owned by McHugh Media - a family-run business launched in 2008 by Michael and Michelle McHugh (MiNDFOOD, n.d.) - are still being circulated in print form.

Table 21: Nielsen Magazine Readership

Print Magazine Title	Magazine readerships (000) for 12 months to September 30, 2025
AA Directions	808
Kia ora	452
NZ Woman's Weekly	434
NZ Geographic	407
The Australian Women's Weekly	388
NZ House & Garden	355
Woman's Day	341
TV Guide	288
Cuisine	266
NZ Gardener	258
Habitat	236
MiNDFOOD	216
NZ Listener	211
The Word for You Today	195
Rugby News	183
Homestyle	147
Home NZ	110
The Mobile Caravanner	137
Kiwi Garden	121
Home NZ	110
Your Home and Garden	109
Oh Baby	106
NZ Trucking	88
Word for You Today	44

Source: Nielsen CMI Q4 24-Q3 25 Sep 25 as cited in Currie, 2025j.

9. Māori-Language and Māori-Interest News and Current Affairs

Atakohu Middleton

Māori-language and Māori-interest news and current affairs are funded by the state under its statutory Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations to Māori language and culture. Funding for this and other public Māori-language programming is contestable and funnelled primarily through broadcasting funding agency Te Māngai Pāho ([TMP], n.d.).

TMP, set up in 1994, is an independent government agency with a reo revitalisation mandate: it pays for news content to enrich the reo 'languagescape', rather than for the dissemination of news in and of itself. It is platform-agnostic, but expects content to be delivered where audiences are, which is mostly online now (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a; Wehipeihana & Heke, 2024; Verian, 2024).

Māori-interest programming in English is funded primarily through general broadcasting agency Irirangi Te Motu | NZ On Air, part of whose mandate is to support the production of quality Māori content made for a general audience. It does some joint funding with TMP (NZ On Air, 2025a).

Whakaata Māori is bulk funded by Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry for Māori Development, and provides digital news only, having scrapped its live-to-air show at the end of 2024. Whakaata Māori can also apply for TMP's contestable funding for various genres of content (Whakaata Māori, 2024).

For detail on the history and makeup of the Māori-language and Māori-interest news sector, see *Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership* reports 2020-2025.

A major shake-up of the sector in 2025

For more than a decade, TMP has made no secret of its concern that funding three daily reo-Māori news services (those on TVNZ, Whakaata Māori and the iwi radio news contract held by Radio Waatea) is not an effective use of its resources, encouraging duplication and competition (Tahana, 2010, 2017; Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a). According to TMP Chief Executive Larry Parr,

> Too much energy and money [has gone] into trying to be the number one in Māori news, and we should have been working much smarter around how can we get the best quality Māori news and current affairs for the motu [country]. (Te Wake, 2025)

Over the past eight years, as audiences moved online, TMP encouraged the news and current affairs sector towards a digital-led, decentralised collaboration, and started putting money into new regional news services in an attempt to show the way

(Middleton, 2023). However, it met stout resistance to change from some quarters, and TMP made little headway in terms of structural change (Middleton, 2024b). Alongside this, the agency faces a "fiscal cliff" – the end of short-term top-up funding of $16m in each of the past three financial years, leaving it back at a baseline of $50m from mid-2026 (Rātana, 2025). According to the Reserve Bank's inflation calculator, since the first quarter of 2020 there has been a 25% fall in the purchasing power of a dollar.

Under pressure, TMP has, in the past two years, redoubled its efforts to sheet home the message that static funding and changed consumer habits demand a reshape of the sector. Last year, it initiated meetings with the Māori news and current affairs sector to lay out the realities, and this seems to have been a turning point. The Māori journalists' group Kawea te Rongo responded by facilitating a working group, titled the Māori News and Current Affairs Industry Group, to formulate recommendations for TMP to consider as it drew up its news and current affairs request for funding (RFP).

This industry group, which included a number of the sector's most senior and high-profile journalists, had four meetings between September 2024 and February 2025. In its recommendations, the industry group backed a "shift in focus from linear to digital" and said that the narrowing funding criteria offered "an opportunity to redefine Māori news and current affairs in alignment with contemporary digital trends" (Māori News and Current Affairs Industry Group, 2025).

When TMP issued its RFP in August this year, it praised the Māori News and Current Affairs Industry Group for its "constructive approach," and said that its recommendations were "instrumental in the design of our approach to news and current affairs in response to the changing landscape" (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a, p. 5).

Indeed, the RFP made clear the scale of change that was sought. Larry Parr called it a "quantum leap" and the most significant change to the Māori news and current affairs landscape to date (Te Wake, 2025). The RFP included a boost for regional news providers and called for emphasis on hard news—rather than softer, magazine-style programming—along with the implementation of a national hub to store and share Māori news (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a; Te Wake, 2025). Parr said that as there was also duplication across current Māori current affairs programming, funding in this area would be scaled back, with producers expected to seek alternative sources of support (Te Wake, 2025). The RFP offered just a year of funding, for the 2026 calendar year, rather than its usual two or three-year-contracts, as a transition period (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a).

In October this year, when TMP issued a press release announcing the results of the funding round, the above had largely come to pass and the agency's satisfaction was clear. The release began,

> Te Māngai Pāho and the Māori news sector have initiated the move towards a more collaborative and inclusive environment for Māori news and current affairs. After extensive consultation … the news and current affairs funding decisions for the 2026 calendar year are set to deliver high-quality reo Māori content to the places audiences are consuming it. (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b)

TMP's Parr said that the funding decisions, which total $11m for the 2026 year, represented the "future direction of Māori media. Our goal has been to encourage collaboration, highlight regional journalism and ensure the content reaches people where they are" (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b). In an interview with JMAD, he said that online and face-to-face consultation before and during the RFP process had been extensive, requiring patience: "I'm just pleased with the maturity of the sector – they've been able to grapple with the challenges and come up with solutions" (L. Parr, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

TMP acknowledges that one-year contracts don't provide the certainty needed to make long-term decisions; its "hope and expectation" is that 2026 "will be a year in which we all work together to discover what is possible in a modified news and current affairs landscape and iron out the wrinkles". That includes working out medium and long-term funding requirements and whether the necessary funding is available. In 2027, the agency is prepared to consider returning to its usual practice of multi-year contracts (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a, p. 6).

TMP also acknowledges that change is disruptive. Says Parr, "We are committed to working alongside all providers to ensure a smooth transition to this new media landscape." He is upbeat about the future: "While there are still challenges facing the sector, we believe we are better positioned to deliver news and current affairs which prioritises a Māori worldview and quality journalism" (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b).

Pivotal to the new landscape is the creation of a national news hub, a role won by Whakaata Māori with a bid of $1.5m. The hub, named Te Iho – He Pātaka Kōrero, will store content produced by the TMP-funded regional news services—we'll discuss these shortly. In an interview with JMAD, Maria Barlow, Whakaata Māori Director of Content and Audience Engagement, said, "This pātaka [storehouse] will hold all of these stories in safe way and enable platforms to access them, including potentially *Te Karere* or other news platforms as well, like Radio New Zealand" (M. Barlow, personal communication, November 30, 2025). In technical terms, Barlow adds, it's not a big leap from the station's day-to-day business.

> From a Whakaata Māori perspective, it's what we do … we already deal with hundreds if not thousands of hours of content on a regular basis pumping through our digital workflows for [the channels' app] Māori+, so it's just setting up a separate platform.

Consumers of Māori news will have seen, over the past few years, an increase in content-sharing between news and current affairs providers, with this largely an ad-hoc exercise. Says Barlow, the hub

> feels like, and this is my own personal view, just putting some structure to what is already known and what is already practised. To put some structure and kawa [protocols] in place around how do we govern this with regional news producers, how do we take care as kaitiaki [guardians] of their kaupapa [stories], and ensure that their stories are being syndicated safely.

Barlow expects Te Iho to be up and running at the beginning of February 2026. At the time of writing, in early November, she stressed that "we're in early days … this needs to be designed to be fit for purpose for the regional news providers and the platforms and the funder, and we're trying to find the solution that suits everyone's needs". However, Barlow acknowledges that with just 12 months of funding confirmed, Whakaata Māori will not be able to integrate the hub into its existing systems and will therefore lose some cost efficiencies in the design phase. "We have to set it up on its own as we don't know where it will be 12 months from here … it's such a challenge."

Regional news producers supported Whakaata Māori's bid for the job, Barlow says, and she hopes that existing trust and goodwill will get new ecosystem off to a good start. "I'm sure over time, as the regional news providers see their stories amplified effectively and in the right way, the flow will happen much more effectively." The new environment is, she says, about collaboration, not competition:

> We never look [at] the regions as competitors – I don't look at *Te Karere* as a competitor. We shouldn't be seeing each other as competition. It's actually about the breadth of perspective and how we can support each other, and how much more effective and impactful we can be if we are more organised and trusting of each other.

News at Whakaata Māori

As related in last year's report, static funding saw Whakaata Māori restructured last year, with the end of its linear bulletin *Te Ao Māori News* part of a pivot to digital-first news (Gunson, 2024; Smith, 2024). The presenter of that show, Peata Melbourne, is now news editor and running a team of 17 story producers, most of them based in

Auckland. The newsroom collaborates on regional and national events with the iwi-based regional providers (M. Barlow, personal communication, October 30, 2025).

Whakaata Māori CEO Shane Taurima said in the 2024 JMAD report that he had had noticed a slippage towards English in reporting output and that in 2025, the focus would return to reporting in te reo Māori (Middleton, 2024b). Asked about this, Maria Barlow, Director of Content & Audience Engagement, says that from the beginning of this year, the reporting team put a lot of effort into reo-only stories. However, they discovered that search engines were not picking up these stories well—a problem in an English-heavy digital world. Most stories are now bilingual to try and overcome these limitations: "The technology doesn't work in our favour, so we have to use te reo Pākehā to ensure we are still searchable and findable," says Barlow.

Regional news providers

The regional news providers are based on iwi clusters and their radio stations. For the hub, each provider will produce "high-interest news stories" that are 70-100% in te reo Māori, with content tailored for digital, social media and radio; the services will also produce live news events (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a, p. 14). The services will be expected to produce a set number of stories of national and local interest per week, with the number recorded in their contracts. TMP will be collecting data on reach and engagement. The regional providers are as follows:

Aukaha News encompasses a collective of seven iwi stations in the upper North Island and gathers news in the triangle spanning South Auckland, Hamilton (where it is based), Rotorua, Taupō and Tauranga. It has gained up to $1m for 2026 (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b). Executive producer is Roihana Nuri and the teams include Maioha Panapa, Te Kawa Paora and Maharaia Waaka. (J. Ake, personal communication, October 29, 2025)

Pūkāea, which covers the Eastern Bay of Plenty, was launched early in 2025 and has gained up to $1m for its second year of operation (Te Karere TVNZ, 2025; Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b). It is based out of Tūmeke FM in Whakatāne; station manager Jarrod Dodd says that the reporters are Kereama Wright, Wikitoria Day, Moko Edmonds and Herewini Waikato, plus stringers. (J. Dodd, personal communication, November 4, 2025)

Te Kūkupa, the Far North news service run by Ngāti Hine FM, Te Reo Takiwā o Tautoko and Te Reo Irirangi o Te Hiku o Te Ika, has gained up to $850,000 for the 2026 year. The service began in 2024. (Northern Advocate, 2024; Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b).

Te Reo o te Uru started in 2021 and serves Taranaki, Whanganui and Manawatū. It has nine staff and up to $600,000 in funding for the 2026 calendar year. (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b; T. O'Brien, personal communication, November 3, 2025).

Tahu News services the South Island and has up to $600,000 for 2026. This service started in 2021 and has five staff. Executive producer to the end of 2025 is Ripeka Timutimu. (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b; R. Timutimu, personal communication, November 3, 2025).

Taioro: This is a newly commissioned, reo-led regional news service spanning from Potaka on the East Coast to Gisborne, Heretaunga and Wairarapa and produced by Tūranga FM in partnership with Radio Ngāti Porou and Radio Kahungunu. It has gained up to $850,000 for 2026. Producer is Tina Wickliffe with staff Rāhia Timutimu, Talisa Kupenga, Mātai Smith, Aroha Treacher, Rāhina Huata and David Jones. (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b, M. Smith, personal communication, November 3, 2025)

The new regional news ecosystem spells the end of the long-running iwi radio news contract, created in 1995 and since 2004 by Auckland urban station Te Reo Irirangi o Waatea (Middleton, 2024a, 2024b; Radio Waatea, 2004). However, TMP CEO Larry Parr acknowledges that it will take time for the national hub to be running, so Waatea will continue to receive funding for its national news service into early 2026 to cover the transition period (L. Parr, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

If you map the regional providers' coverage areas over Aotearoa, most of the country is covered. However, there are gaps here and there, including those left by the end of the iwi radio news contract. To fill these gaps, TMP has funded two journalism roles in Auckland and Wellington for 2026. Tuia, a collective led by experienced producers Ripeka Timutimu and Roihana Nuri, was allocated up to $494,620 to employ a general reporter in Auckland and a political reporter in Wellington. Tuia is working under the umbrella of production company ManiaTai Ltd (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b, R. Timutimu, personal communication, November 3, 2025).

Funding changes for *Te Karere*

TMP has signalled for some time that in a digital world, it would no longer fund linear broadcast costs—the costs of studios, presenters, transmission and the like. As a result, *Te Karere,* broadcast on TVNZ, gained $1m for 2026, down from the $2.7m it was granted for 2025 (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b). The show, a Monday-to-Friday operation, has shown over the last year that it can pivot; it has used content from regional services in its broadcasts, giving a foretaste of how a national news hub will benefit both news producers and consumers.

Asked how it would respond to the funding cut, a TVNZ spokeswoman said in a statement that the station was "committed" to continuing *Te Karere* as a weekday bulletin in 2026 and would use material from the national hub to support its production. "Next year's budget is yet to be finalised, but we will be looking at how we work within the new model, meet our funding envelope and utilise TVNZ's wider newsgathering capability to support the programme and grow its digital presence." The spokeswoman said that while *Te Karere* received $2.7m in funding for 260 episodes in 2026, it also received a $900,000 "contribution" from TVNZ. Asked to itemise that contribution, she said, "We're not able to give a breakdown, but this covers a range of in-kind and hard costs involved in producing the show i.e. studio costs and crew costs to deliver production, archival content and our research library" (G. Green, personal communication, November 6, 2025).

Current affairs

TMP funds two categories here. The first is content for fluent speakers, which must be 70-100% in te reo, and this attracted funding of up to $1.8m. The second is content that appeals to consumers who are receptive to te reo, and this content must be 30-70% in te reo; this category attracted up to $1.2m.

At present, Whakaata Māori is not producing current affairs in-house, with that slot taken by *Te Ao with Moana* since 2019. The show, presented by political activist and musician Moana Maniapoto, and produced by Black Pearl Ltd, aims at a receptive audience. It returns in 2026 with up to $672,500 to produce 30 shows of 26 mins each (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b).

This year, long-running Sunday morning show *Marae*, produced by Pango Productions for TVNZ, stepped up from the receptive category, applying under the fluent category. It returns in 2026 with up to $1.5m to produce 35, 29-minute shows, each at least 80% in te reo Māori (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b).

A newcomer is the 100% reo show *Ruku* ($600,000), which will be made by Te Noni, the production company of journalist and docuseries maker Ngahuia Wade. She says that *Ruku* is "a ground-breaking, digital-first current affairs series for fluent Māori language speakers … it will showcase a fresh format of high quality, well-researched and culturally appropriate news stories from a Māori worldview". The show, 10 episodes of 45 minutes each, will be available on iwi radio and via the regional news services and subtitled (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b, N. Wade, personal communication, October 29, 2025).

Back for another year is the Aotearoa Media Collective, run by Mihi Forbes and Annabelle Lee-Mather. They have gained $469,335 for *Mata Series 4*. Expected output is four longform digital video projects of 30 minutes each, 20 long-form interviews of 26 minutes each and 24 episodes for Radio New Zealand. The reo requirement is 30% (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025b).

As foreshadowed by TMP when it issued its RFP in August, current affairs was an area of duplication, and here there was a casualty. *The Hui*, produced by Great Southern Television and in its 10th season this year, started as a linear show on Three, and still plays on Three as well as on various digital sources. In recent years, it has been funded by TMP ($1m last year) and NZ On Air ($788,000 last year). However, TMP did not provide funding for 2026 (L. Parr, personal communication, October 28, 2025). While *The Hui* has a good reputation for the quality of its work, it is a relatively expensive weekly show and primarily in English, which may have counted against it given the pressure on TMP's budget. Producer Rewa Harriman says that the show is "exploring other funding opportunities to continue next year" (R. Harriman, personal communication, November 30, 2025). Great Southern Television owner Phil Smith said he was "extremely optimistic" that the show could continue with the support of NZ On Air alone. "We have lost some funding, but not all. We still have a very active supporter in New Zealand On Air" (McConnell, 2025).

The quality and quantity of te reo Māori in news and current affairs

As earlier noted, Māori news and current affairs is funded to uphold government commitments to te reo Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. TMP assesses how well kaupapa and tikanga [culture and customs] are reflected in the shows it funds and the quality of the Māori language used. On the latter, the six areas assessed are pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, euphony, captions (where applicable) and strategic consistency—this means alignment with the Māori language plan that every TMP-funded show must have as well as the broader national revitalisation strategy. Records of the latest round of assessments[1] of news and current shows reveal that they are tracking well, with a couple of the shows required to hit 30% reo not quite making the grade. Here, one reviewer wrote, "Too many missed opportunities to speak Māori."

[1] Personal communication under the Official Information Act, November 11, 2025.

Workforce development

Facing a shortage of well-trained talent in all areas, including journalism, the Māori media sector spent 2021 and 2022 putting together a workforce development programme—Te Rāngai Pāpāho Māori Workforce and Capability Proposition. It was presented in July 2023 to Willie Jackson, then Labour minister for Māori development and also broadcasting. However, it was not progressed before the change of government in late 2023 and appears to have stalled in the office of the current minister, Tama Potaka (Middleton, 2024b).

JMAD asked what he intended to do about the workforce proposal, in particular whether there would be a bid to secure funding for the plan in Budget 2026. In a statement, Potaka said, "It's too early to comment on any specific Budget processes, but the Government is focused on practical, sustainable pathways that build capability across Māori broadcasting and journalism." That funding won't be coming from TMP. The agency has signalled that with its funds under pressure, there will be less money for capacity-building and training; it expects that education and workforce development sources will pick up those areas (Te Māngai Pāho, 2025a).

One workforce development agency has made a small but positive step in that area. Late last year, the Toi Mai Workforce Development Council produced a deep dive into the needs of the news and current affairs sector in general, *Ngā Awa Kōrero* | The Rivers of Narrative. The clear message was that journalism training was not delivering work-ready staff (Toi Mai Workforce Development Council, 2024). Toi Mai has since worked with Hamilton-based Wintec, which runs a year-long, Level 5 Diploma in Journalism, to fund nine 300-hour paid internships for the 2026 intake. The internships, paid at the 2026 Living Wage rate, will take place in national and regional newsrooms of outlets such as NZME, Radio New Zealand and Stuff; the aim is to help produce graduates who are work-ready (Toi Mai Workforce Development Council, 2025).

Wintec programme coordinator Cate Prestidge says it's exciting to see the course come together. "Industry have told us they are keen to take on cadets but are often constrained by resources for training," she adds. "It was important to develop a programme of supported on-campus education while also giving industry substantial input in the final term through on-the-job training in the regions or in larger centres" (Toi Mai Workforce Development Council, 2025).

Toi Mai Workforce Lead Tim Croft says that although the programme is not specifically aimed at Māori and its management rests with Wintec, he hopes Māori interested in studying journalism will apply (T. Croft, personal communication, October 28, 2025).

10. Conclusion

Wayne Hope

Amidst a national media environment long dominated by transnational media-communication conglomerates and private financial organisations, the 2024 JMAD media ownership report identified a 'perfect storm' of unfolding events and underlying trends. Television news and current affairs programmes plus print and online media titles were discontinued. Severe staff cuts affected television, online-print and radio. At the same time, advertising revenue continued to shift from traditional mass media to social media sites and platforms. Audiences for radio and television and readerships for print outlets were declining, however gradually. During 2025, after the storm of 2024 events, long-run trends involving media use and advertising spend remained and new forms of transnational financial–corporate media ownership appeared. Thus, once Trade Me (controlled by British private equity firm Apax Partners) acquired 50% of Stuff Digital, Stuff Ltd became less of an independently owned national entity. Sky Television's purchase of Discovery New Zealand, incorporating Three and ThreeNow, further signified the commercial decline of linear television. Most portentously, Canadian billionaire Jim Grenon's attempts to obtain a controlling share of NZME potentially compromised the editorial independence of radio and print outlets, most notably *The New Zealand Herald* and *Newstalk ZB*. NZME's board compared Grenon's bid to Elon Musk's investment in X and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's interference in his *Washington Post's* opinion section. From this JMAD report, one could add Larry and David Ellison's disposition towards *CBS News* after the Paramount-Skydance merger. Whether or not far-right populism becomes entrenched within the national media domain is at present an open question. Beyond NZME, a political coalition of journalists, MPs, unions, opinion leaders and concerned citizens would challenge any such possibility. And, subsequent debates would circulate across remaining public media outlets including Radio New Zealand, Whakaata Māori, Iwi radio and a growing podcast space. However, if the contrary trend gains strength, a stark picture emerges—high-profile culture wars amidst a concerted undermining of public knowledge, not just in media but throughout society.

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