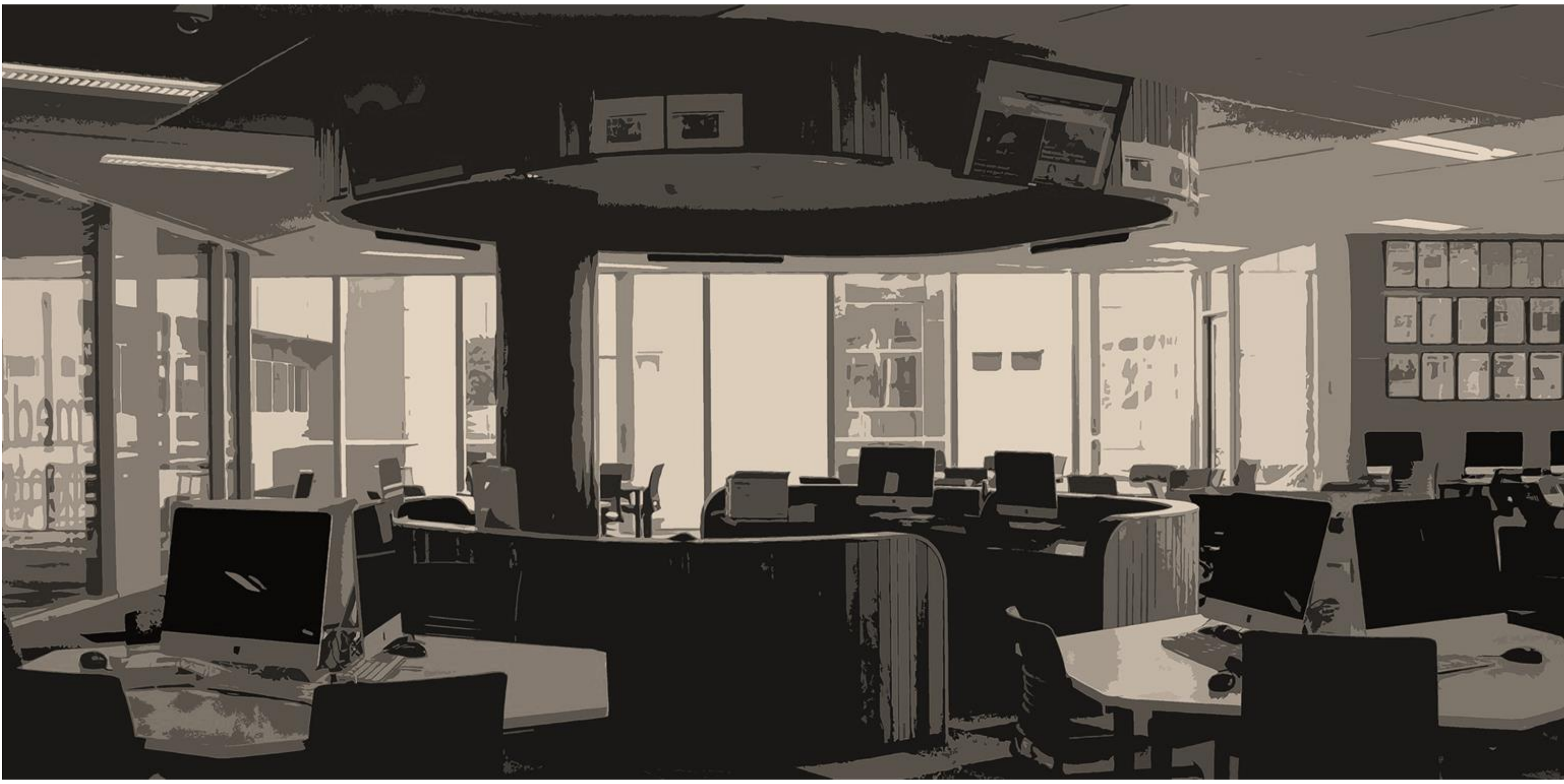
Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership 2023

AUT Research Centre for Journalism,
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 documenting and analysing 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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Contents

Tables

Figures

Introduction

Wayne Hope

In late 2023, the basic pattern of national media ownership remains: shareholder and private-equity owned corporations, smaller private independent companies, and crown-owned broadcasters. The first sector is dominated by New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME), Sky, MediaWorks and Warner Brothers/Discovery. Overall, these entities are owned by financial institutions (listed and unlisted) and telecommunications/media entertainment behemoths with global holdings.

Within the Crown-owned broadcasting sector, the TVNZ-RNZ merger was terminated. On 23 June 2022, the announcement of draft legislation had named the new entity as Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media (ANZPM). Television New Zealand and RNZ were to become subsidiaries under the new title on 1 March 2024. In mid-2022, legislative passage involving public submissions and select committee hearings slowly unfolded. However, on 12 December, then-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern stated, ominously, that “we do need to make sure we are totally focused, we prioritise, and that we will be making sure that if we need to pare back, we will” (RNZ, 2022). She did not say whether or not the TVNZ-RNZ merger would be changed or discontinued. On 8 February 2023, three weeks after Ardern resigned, new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins ended a raft of public policy initiatives, including the merger (RNZ, 2023f). This finished the prospect of a large public media entity designed to counter the commercial power of private media and social media corporations.

JMAD’s 2021 and 2022 media ownership reports, alongside this year’s publication, detail the asymmetrical relationship between social media corporations and news media organisations. As Alphabet/Google and Meta/Facebook corner advertising revenue, they purloin and repurpose new publisher content. At the same time, media outlets rely increasingly on platforms to disseminate news content to users. News publisher attempts to obtain compensation from social media corporations in different countries have sought a legislatively backed news bargaining code and/or voluntary negotiated settlements. Here, during 2022 and early 2023, the latter objective prevailed. In May 2022, 28 members of the New Zealand News Publishers Association (NPA) were pursuing payment from Meta/Facebook and/or Alphabet/Google. *New Zealand Herald* owner, NZME, decided to negotiate separate arrangements with each of the social media corporations. In December 2022, Alphabet/Google announced signed payment agreements with 23 national publishers. By March 2023, 25 news publishers had made content payment deals with Google News Showcase (Myllylahti, 2023, pp. 95–97). Plans for legislatively mandated compensation came to fruition on 17 August 2023 as the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill. It would give the Broadcasting Standards Authority a statutory framework for overseeing a news bargaining code designed to facilitate negotiated agreements between news publishers and platform operators. Although some compensatory payments may transpire, media researcher Peter Thompson doubts the efficacy of this legislation "given that the major platforms are now developing licensing agreements, without a statutory framework…there is a question of what the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill will deliver in terms of outcomes beyond the current arrangements" (Thompson, forthcoming).

These background difficulties for journalism were compounded by declining financial assistance. Between 2021 and 2023 inclusive, the Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) provided NZ$55 million to support over 200 journalist roles, specific projects and industry development and training. News reporting involving local towns and communities, courts, regional and farming issues and Māori and Pasifika affairs was thereby enhanced. After the October election of a National-Act-New Zealand First coalition government, new Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters described the just-ended PIJF as "bribery" – a less than propitious omen for news journalism's future. Journalistic public spheres are also vulnerable to the caprices of media owners. On 30 March 2023, Mediaworks, under an American investment and Australian private equity firm, summarily closed newstalk radio station Today FM (one year after beginning transmission). In a difficult economic climate, short-term financial imperatives are anti-ethical to news reportage, journalistic enquiry and public debate.

1: Media Ownership in Global Context

Wayne Hope

In 2023, mapping acquisitions across media-entertainment, news media, social media, gaming, streaming and information technologies revealed supervening concentrations of ownership. Streaming and big tech corporations encroach upon, reshape and/or contract ownership structures in adjacent media domains.

Digital streaming and concentrated media ownership

Introductory observations are encapsulated in the *Who Owns the UK Media* report from the Media Reform Coalition at Goldsmiths Leverhulme Research Centre (Chivers, 2023). Findings indicated an "endemic crisis of concentrated media ownership" that had "worsened" with "even fewer companies controlling larger shares of the media landscape". More broadly, Alphabet/Google and Meta/Facebook held "almost monolithic control over online advertising, user data, content distribution and news creation—amounting to an unprecedented concentration of ownership in the online media supply chain". As of October 2023, Bauer Radio and Global Radio owned 65% of local, commercial and analogue radio stations. Three companies – DNG Media, News UK and Reach – held over 40% of total audience reach covered by the top 50 online news brands. Alphabet/Google, Meta/Facebook and X Corp (X/Twitter) together owned 10 of the top 15 online platforms used to access news in the UK. And, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney+ accounted for 80% of all UK video on demand subscriptions (Chivers, 2023). The report's summary assessment of ownership in the UK media domain has global resonance.

> What does it mean to have 'free' media when a handful of giant corporations own our newspapers, TV channels, radio stations, social media and streaming services? Is our media truly independent if the most influential news organisations and online platforms are controlled by billionaires and company boards pursuing their own vested interests? How can we stay informed about pressing issues in our communities when local news sources are being cut, closed or consolidated into online-only outlets with no grounding in the places they report on (Chivers, 2023).

From 2 May to 27 September 2023, the Writers Guild of America, representing 11,500 screenwriters, went on strike in dispute with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. In August, the Guild's America West branch released a report entitled *The New Gatekeepers: How Disney, Amazon and Netflix Will Take Over Media*. It found that Disney's multibillion-dollar acquisitions of the ABC network (1995), Pixar Animation (2006), Marvel Studios (2009), Lucas Film (2012) and 21st Century Fox (2019) had generated the power to "reduce film output, shut down competing studios, foreclose independent content from its distribution networks, expand control of the labour market and force creators to give up financial participation in future licensing revenue". Amazon, over the last 15 years, has gained a sizeable multimedia presence. Its interconnected media businesses provide the capacity to disadvantage competitors across markets "from content production (Amazon Studios, MGM) to content distribution (Prime Video, FREEV, MGM+) to streaming aggregation/devices (Amazon channels and Fire TV)". Netflix, the world's largest streaming service, has obtained, since 2016, multiple companies in various sectors including film production studios, animation studios, intellectual property catalogues as well as video game studios. Over 2022 and 2023, in response to slowing revenue returns, Netflix used its newly acquired market power to "reduce spending", "execute layoffs", and "raise subscription rates" in the US and internationally (Writers Guild of America West, 2023).

News media and social media

As previous JMAD Media Ownership reports indicate, Alphabet/Google and Meta/Facebook draw advertising revenue away from news media companies while repurposing their content for online users (JMAD, 2020, pp. 79–82; JMAD, 2021, pp. 6–7; JMAD, 2022, pp. 11–13). Large numbers of news publishers depend for distribution on a smaller number of digital platforms that are less invested in news content. This asymmetrical relationship threatens advertiser-driven news production and the practices of public journalism (Flew, 2023). News publishers internationally have sought remuneration for the use of their content and a collective right to negotiate with social media corporations, especially Meta/Facebook and Alphabet/Google. The JMAD 2022 report observed that these initiatives were advanced, with varying degrees of success, in the European Union, Australia, the United States, Canada, Brazil and India. During 2023, the same uneven pattern continued. Australia's News Media Bargaining Code was complemented by new laws to penalise social media corporations for spreading misinformation and disinformation online. Meanwhile, in Canada and Brazil, bargaining code legislation was openly challenged by social media corporations. In November 2022, a retrospective

Australian Government Treasury report on the new bargaining code noted positively "over 30 commercial agreements between digital platforms (Google and Meta) and a cross-section of Australian news businesses" (Australian Government, 2022). Critically, Terry Flew noted a lack of transparency about the success or otherwise of media platform deals, monetary distributions to specific news publishers and the use of such funds within news organisations (Flew, 2023). In January 2023, Australian Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland announced legislation to curb the spread of disinformation and misinformation on digital platforms (Rowland, 2023a). In June, public consultation commenced on a legal and regulatory framework involving the Australian Communications and Media Authority (Rowland, 2023b).

Canada's Online News Act (C-18), enacted on 22 June 2023, was intended to come into force in December. Meta/Facebook and Alphabet/Google were to bargain with media businesses for the right to repurpose their news content on platforms. Canada's parliamentary budget office had estimated that a total annual compensation of C$329 million would be available to news organisations (Bossio, 2023). From Alphabet/Google, the Canadian legislation has met "dogged resistance" rather than an early willingness to settle, as had happened in Australia. Here, Canadian media researcher Howard Law explained that Australia's 2021 News Media Bargaining Code did not designate Alphabet/Google or Meta/Facebook on the proviso that they would make deals with news organisations. However, under Canada's Online News Act, "Google must satisfy a diverse array of news outlets in a very structured and binding set of rules administered and enforced by an independent regulator" (Law, 2023). Further, if negotiated settlements could not be established, the Act provided for a compulsory arbitration framework. In response, Alphabet/Google termed these arrangements unworkable. Alongside Meta-Facebook, they pledged to block links to Canadian news organisations on their platforms (Walker, 2023). Effectively, this limited the capacity of news publishers to reach their news users through social media platforms. In October, Law positioned Alphabet/Google's statements and actions as part of a negotiation process that was "headed to a December endgame" when the law would come into force (Law, 2023). Before then, though, in late November, a settlement was reached between the Canadian government and Alphabet/Google. That the latter agreed to set a C$100 million yearly cap on payments to news media companies was a partial win for both sides. Alphabet/Google finally complied, but the amount promised was less than anticipated. Draft regulations of the C-18 Bill had set compensatory payments at around C$170 million (Djuric, 2023). Meta/Facebook's stance was far less focused on sustained negotiation. In May 2023, Nick Clegg, the President of Global Affairs declared that "if this flawed legislation is passed, we will have to end the availability of news content on Facebook and Instagram in Canada" (Meta Newsroom, 2023b). Communications Director Andy Stone announced in August that it had begun to terminate Canadian user access to news and news links on Meta/Facebook's platforms (Guardian, 2023). More than a rebuke to news publishers was at stake here; commercial priorities were also changing. In a September blog post, they noted that news comprised less than 3% of what users worldwide saw on their Facebook feed. Existing deals with news publishers in the UK, France and Germany would not be renewed (Meta Newsroom, 2023a; Kobie, 2023).

In Brazil, a proposed bill, PL2370, would require platforms to compensate news publishers along with a "must carry" provision preventing social media corporations from dropping news and news links from their offerings. And, they would be held culpable for enabling the online dissemination of hate speech and disinformation (Schriffin, 2023). Alphabet/Google and Telegram's lobbying against the bill was complemented by an orchestrated campaign through their platforms and posts. In May 2023, Brazil's Supreme Court, in response to a request from the lower house, opened an investigation into such activity (Reuters, 2023).

Correspondingly, the UK's Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill (DNCC), introduced to Parliament in April 2023, has reached its second reading in the House of Lords. With successful passage, the Digital Markets Unit regulator could require major platforms to negotiate with news publishers for compulsory outcomes. Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) had, previously, openly favoured this outcome (Ofcom & CMA, 2021). In July 2023, ITN Chief Executive Rachel Corp, the Public Interest News Foundation and the News Media Association (NMA) vouched support for the DNCC Bill (NMA, 2023). The NMA, representing UK national, regional and local news media (print and digital), covers approximately 900 news media titles (Cuttill, 2023). Fierce lobbyists against the DNCC Bill include Meta/Facebook, Alphabet/Google, Apple and the neoliberal Institute of Economic Affairs (Bristow, 2023a; Bristow, 2023b).

US newspapers, financial ownership and news deserts

Revenue pressures on news organisations also reflect ownership concentrations across traditional media. Financialised control of the US newspaper industry exemplifies the tendency. Last year's JMAD report drew on a 2022 study—*The State of Local News*—from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and Integrated Marketing Communications. Mega chains owned by, or indebted to, hedge funds, private equity groups and other investment firms acquired and downsized hundreds of newspapers. Large regional chains purchased titles on-sold by the major chains. Principally, Alden Global Capital (AGC), the country's second-largest press owner, drove these developments (Abernathy, 2022). The 2023 Medill School report revealed that Alden had discontinued another 16 titles, including dailies. Over the same period, Gannett/Gatehouse, the largest mega chain, had discontinued 97 titles. Author Penelope Abernathy gave historical perspective on the decline.

The number of local news outlets continued to contract at an even steeper rate in 2023. On the current trajectory, by the end of next year, the country will have lost a third of its newspapers since 2005. Discouragingly, the growth in alternative local news sources—digital and ethnic news outlets as well as public broadcasting—have not kept pace with what has been lost (Abernathy, 2023).

At the same time, mega-chain acquisitions continued. In July, Patrick Soon-Shiong, a biotech billionaire who owns the *Los Angeles Times*, sold the *San Diego Union-Tribune* to an affiliate of the Media News Group owned by AGC for an undisclosed amount (Weisberg, 2023). In August, Alden purchased four daily newspapers, some weeklies and a commercial printing business from Times-Shamrock, a Pennsylvania media group (Waldman, 2023). In a different kind of ownership deal, Reade Brower sold Masthead Maine, the state's largest newspaper group with 5 daily and 27 weekly titles, to the non-profit National Trust for Local News (in collaboration with the Maine Journalism Foundation) (Mathews, 2023).

Global news media companies

The largest media corporations with significant news media holdings in multiple formats—digital, print and broadcasting—appear in Table 1. Ranking order is based on market capitalisation (unit share price multiplied by total number of outstanding shares) (Seth, 2023).

Table 1: News Media Companies Ranked on Market Capitalisation

Rank	Media corporation	Market cap US$ billion
1	Comcast	186.7
2	Thompson Reuters	58.53
3	Naspers	32.54
4	Warner Bros. Discovery	28.22
5	Fox Corp.	14.76
6	News Corp.	12.15
7	Paramount Global	8.96
8	The New York Times Company	7.24
9	Nexstar Media Group	4.7
10	IAC/Interactive Corp.	4.65

Source: Seth, S. (2023, September). *The world's top 10 news media companies.* Investopedia. https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/021815/worlds-top-ten-news-companies-nws-gci-trco-nyt.aspx

Mega deals across communications sectors

Microsoft's 2022 acquisition of Activision Blizzard for US$68.7 billion (Spangler, 2022) was partially revised and concluded. In October 2023, the UK's CMA gave approval on the condition that French video game publisher Ubisoft obtain cloud streaming rights to major Activision Blizzard games (Warren, 2023). In May 2022, Broadcom, a designer, manufacturer and global supplier of semiconductor software infrastructure products acquired VMware, a cloud computing virtual reality company, for US$61billion (Patel, 2022). Obtaining regulatory approval across various national jurisdictions concluded in November 2023 after Chinese authorities assented (Varghese, 2023). Of new software deals, Cisco Systems' announced takeover of Splunk in September for US$28 billion was the largest of the year. In a post-2022 recessionary economic environment, software merger and acquisition activity declined, and software market valuations fell (Sayer, 2023).

2. Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership: Categories and Shareholdings

Saing Te

For much of 2023, the challenging economic environment and changing news habits and attitudes of audiences resulted in a decline in revenue, staff resignations, redeployments and redundancies, and a strategic shift towards a digital-first approach. On 30 June 2023, Spark Sport closed, which left Sky Network Television and Sports Entertainment Network as the main broadcaster of paid sports. The ownership composition of the other media operators in the country remains largely unchanged, although there were changes to the senior leadership team. There remain three Crown-owned entities, four shareholding companies, one private equity-owned company and several independent publishers (Table 2).

Three Crown entity companies

Whakaata Māori

Whakaata Māori, formerly known as Māori Television, is the national indigenous media organisation. It is funded by the government to advance Māori language and culture. The broadcaster is accessible free-to-air, online and on demand. The channel has the websites www.maoritelevision.com and www.teaomaori.news; two applications, MĀORI+ and Te Ao Mori News; and a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn.

In May 2023, Minister of Broadcasting Willie Jackson explained that the Budget 2023 allocation of $51 million for Māori broadcasting over the next two years would go directly to Whakaata Māori, iwi radio and Te Māngai Pāho: $20 million was allocated for Māori language and culture media content; $10 million for media content that depicts Māori stories and perspectives; $12 million for a continuation of iwi media collaboration initiatives and to meet iwi media transmission costs; and $9 million for building capacity and capability of the Māori workforce in both te reo Māori and technical and vocational skills in Māori media programmes (Los'e, 2023).

RNZ

Radio New Zealand (RNZ) is the sole public-interest national broadcaster. It is commercial-free and receives funding through NZ On Air and Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage. The broadcaster receives about $42.6 million every year for its operating costs. Paul Thompson remains as the chief executive (CE) and editor-in-chief. Dr Jim Mather continues to chair the Board. He is joined by Sina Wendt, Michael O'Donnell, Irene Gardiner and Jane Wrightson, who took up their positions on 1 July 2023. In October, Thompson confirmed that RNZ's political editor, Jane Patterson, would move into the role of director of editorial quality and training (Currie, 2023d).

Back in February 2023, the Government stopped work on the establishment of Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media. This was followed by an announcement that RNZ and NZ on Air would receive additional funding of $117.8 million over four years. Of the total, RNZ would have an annual increase of about $25.7 million to ensure its financial viability: $12 million would be allocated for the maintenance of public media services; $12 million for a new digital platform; and $1.7 million for AM transmission (RNZ, 2023e) Of note, in September 2023, veteran broadcaster Kim Hill announced her departure from RNZ.

TVNZ

TVNZ is a commercially driven, free-to-air broadcaster that is bound by the requirements of the Television New Zealand Act 2003. Its primary objective "is to provide compelling content to New Zealand audiences" (TVNZ, 2023c). In April 2023, following the scrapped public media merger, CE Simon Power announced his departure from the company. At the beginning of July, Brent McAnulty, TVNZ's head of legal and corporate affairs, took over as acting CE. Other changes to the leadership team included Alastair Carruthers as the new chairman and Nevak Rogers as Acting Director of Content. Cate Calver (previously Cate Slater) was also appointed as Chief Transformation Officer; however, in October, it was reported that she was leaving the broadcaster to be the CE of Great Southern Television (Currie, 2023d).

TVNZ's *Statement of Performance Expectations for the year ending 30 June 2024* showed that the Board estimated the current commercial valuation of the broadcaster to be $240.1 million, which is composed of an enterprise value of $140.5 million and forecast net cash of $99.6 million. This total was down from the 30 June 2022 figure of $249.0 million. Of note, TVNZ disclosed that for the 2024 financial year, it expects a net loss after tax (NLAT) of $15.6 million (TVNZ, 2023d, p. 4). As of 31 March 2023, the number of staff employed was 769.53 full-time equivalents. The Board indicated that it had profit ambitions for the year 2028. They identified three key strategic areas of investment: “extending digital audience reach,” “accelerating digital revenue,” and “creating a sustainable future business” (TVNZ, 2023c, p. 7).

On 27 October, TVNZ reported that for the year ended June 2023, total revenue fell to $327.6 million (2022: $341.7 million) and profit was down 78% to $1.7 million (2022: $7.9 million). Total advertising revenue was $309 million, down $12.1 million from the previous year. However, digital revenue continued to grow (1News, 2023).

Table 2: Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership: Categories, funding and assets as at 25 October 2023

Company	Funding	Notable assets
Crowned-owned entities		
RNZ	State	RNZ National, RNZ Concert, RNZ Pacific, AM Network, RNZ News
TVNZ	Advertising, programme funds, other	TV ONE, TV2, OnDemand, onenews.co.nz, Re:
Whakaata Māori	State	Māori Television, Te Reo, Te Ao Māori News
Independently owned media companies		
Allied Press (family-owned)	Advertising, subscriptions	The Otago Daily Times, The Omaru Mail, The Star, The Ensign, The News, North Canterbury News, Southern Rural Life, The Southland Express, The Ashburton Courier, The Timaru Courier, Central Rural Life, Mountain Scene, The Greymouth Star, Hokitika Guardian, West Coast Messenger, Allied Press Magazines (e.g., 03, Rugby News, Classic Driver, and Kiwi Gardener), Channel 39
Asia Pacific Report	n/a	asiapacificreport.nz
Crux (Crux Publishing Ltd)	Advertising, Donations	Crux
National Business Review (publisher owned)	Subscriptions	NBR
Newsroom (editor owned)	Advertising, memberships, donations, sponsorships	Newsroom, Newsroom Pro
Scoop (Scoop Publishing Limited)	Donations, subscriptions	Scoop.co.nz, Scoop Pro
Stuff (owned by an individual and staff)	Advertising, subscriptions, donations	stuff.co.nz, The Post, The Press, Sunday Star-Times, Neighbourly, Ensemble, NZ Gardener, NZ House & Garden
The Spinoff (publisher/worker owned)	Donations, memberships, advertising, Sponsorships	The Spinoff

Private equity-owned media company		
MediaWorks	Advertising	Mai Fm, The Edge, George, More FM, The Breeze, The Rock, The Sound, Magic, Humm FM, rova, Tarana, Channel X
Shareholder-owned media companies		
Warner Bros. Discovery	Advertising, distribution, content, other	Three, ThreeNow, Bravo, Discovery, 7 Days, Newshub, The Project, AM, The Nation
NZME	Advertising, circulation and subscription, external printing, and distribution, other	The New Zealand Herald, nzherald.co.nz, BusinessDesk, NewstalkZB, ZM, The Hits, iHeartRadio
Sports Entertainment Network	Advertising, publication circulation, TV production, complementary services, sponsorship, membership, ticketing, merchandising	SEN, SENZ
Sky TV	Subscriptions, commercial revenue, advertising, installation, and other revenue	Sky Box, Sky Pod, Sky Sport Now, Neon, Sky Open

Shareholding companies

New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME)

On 22 February 2023, NZME released its annual report for the year ended to 31 December 2022. Its three strategic pillars—Audio, Publishing and OneRoof—were outlined. The company reported that revenue from all three pillars had increased from the previous financial year. The total operating revenue was $364.6 million (2021: $342.2 million), but the statutory net profit after tax (NPAT) was down 66% to $22.7 million (2021: $34.4 million). The proposed final dividend for the year was up 1 cent from the year before, reaching 6 cents per share (NZME Limited, 2023g, p. 4).

At the end of the 2022 year, the Board remained unchanged with Barbara Chapman, Carol Campbell, David Gibson, Sussan Turner and Guy Horrocks in their respective roles (Table 3). Three of the directors held shares in the company: Chapman had 73,000 shares; Campbell had 150,000; and Gibson had 50,000 (NZME Limited, 2023g, p. 44). The CE, Michael Boggs, held 1,505,390 shares and had 2,098,291 performance rights shares issued to him under the Group's Total Incentive Plan.

The 2022 annual report showed changes to the publisher's substantial shareholders list (Table 4). By the end of December 2022, Auscap Asset Management was no longer a substantial shareholder, while Repertoire Partners LP emerged as a substantial shareholder, holding over 36 million shares. In 2023, there were changes to the company's substantial shareholders. As of 15 October 2023, Spheria Asset Management Pty Limited had acquired more shares, increasing its total to 24,609,085. Pinnacle Investment Management Group Limited was starting to have a substantial holding in the company, holding 9,523,767 shares (NZME Limited, 2023a; 2023e), while Osmium Partners LLC had sold some of its holdings, leaving it with 17,076,410 shares (NZME Limited, 2023e). UBS Group AG and its related bodies corporate and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. and its affiliates ceased to have substantial holdings in the business (NZME Limited, 2023b; 2023c).

Table 3: NZME Board Members and Their Positions on Other Companies (as of 31 December 2022)

Director	Position	Company
Barbara Chapman	Independent chairman and shareholder	NZME
	Chairman	Genesis Energy Limited
	Deputy chair	The New Zealand Initiative
	Patron	New Zealand Rainbow Tick Excellence Awards
	Director	Fletcher Building Limited
	Director	Bank of New Zealand
Carol Campbell	Independent director and shareholder	NZME
	Director	T&G Global Limited
	Director	Asset Plus Limited
	Chair	NZ Post Limited
	Director	Chubb Insurance New Zealand Limited
	Director	Kiwibank Limited
David Gibson	Independent director and shareholder	NZME
	Director and shareholder	DG Advisory Limited
	Director	Rangatira Limited
	Director	Biostrategy Holdings Limited
	Director	Trustpower Limited (resigned 26 March 2022)
	Director	Goodman (NZ) Limited
	Director	Freightways Limited
Sussan Turner	Independent director	NZME
	Director and shareholder	Aspire2 Group Limited
	Pro-chancellor	Auckland University of Technology
	Shareholder	Organic Initiative Limited
Guy Horrocks	Independent director	NZME
	Shareholder	Solve Data, Inc.
	Director	New Zealand Mint Limited
	Advisor and shareholder	Tracksuit Limited
	Shareholder	Setpoint Technologies Inc

Source: NZME Limited. (2023). *New Zealand Media and Entertainment annual report for the year ended 31 December 2022*. NZX. http://nzx-prod-s7fsd7f98s.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/NZM/407102/389062.pdf

Table 4: NZME Substantial Shareholders

Substantial shareholders	As of 7 January 2022		As of 31 December 2022	
	Number of shares held	% of shares held	Number of shares held	% of shares held
Auscap Asset Management Ltd	18,976,962	9.61		
Osmium Partners LLC	33,013,889	16.71	19,497,373	10.60
Spheria Asset Management Pty Ltd	17,844,175	9.03	23,658,182	12.86
UBS Group AG and its related bodies corporate	13,928,980	7.05	32,119,313	17.46
Repertoire Partners LP			36,090,368	19.62

Sources: NZME Limited. (2022). *New Zealand Media and Entertainment annual report for the year ended 31 December 2021*. NZX. http://nzx-prod-s7fsd7f98s.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/NZM/387755/365209.pdf; NZME Limited. (2023). *New Zealand Media and Entertainment annual report for the year ended 31 December 2022*. NZX. http://nzx-prod-s7fsd7f98s.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/NZM/407102/389062.pdf

At the annual shareholders' meeting in April, Chapman was re-elected as director. In August, NZME and its subsidiaries (the Group) acquired the remaining 20% of shares in OneRoof Limited for $2.1 million from Hougarden. NZME launched OneRoof.co.nz in 2018. The acquisition was completed on 18 August 2023. The company's *Half Year Results to 30 June 2023*, showed that operating revenue was $166.2 million (2022: $176.9m) and statutory NPAT was $2.0 million (2022: $8.5m). The Chairman and CE explained, "With New Zealand in economic recession for the first time in a decade, the impacts of inflationary pressures, weak business and consumer confidence and a depressed real estate market have all contributed to a lower revenue result" (NZME Limited, 2023k, p. 4). They also noted that the company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) for 2023 were expected to be around $59 million (2021: $64.7 million). Despite the financial downturn for the first half of 2023, the Board declared an interim dividend of 3.0 cents per share, which was the same rate as last year.

In September 2023, the Newsroom's Tim Murphy (2023) reported that changes to the newspapers and weekly magazines Viva, Travel, Canvas and Reset saw the departure of Amanda Linnell (*Viva* editor), Sarah Daniell (*Canvas* editor), Laura Franklin (Head of Editorial Operations) and David Rowe (Head of Journalism Planning). Paul Hancox had also left his role as chief commercial officer. On 7 November 2023, NZME announced that it was lowering its EBITDA expectations for the 2023 financial year. Earlier, in August 2023, the company expected its EBITDA to be within the range of $59 million to $64 million; however, that figure is now expected to be between $57 million and $59 million. It noted the economic environment had been challenging and that advertising revenue for the first half of the year was down 7% (NZME Limited, 2023j).

NZME is a dual-listed company, appearing on the New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX) and the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX). It trades under NZM. At the close of 27 October 2023, its listed price was $0.87, and the 52-week range was $0.87 and $1.25 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: NZME Stock Performance Graph October 2022–October 2023

Source: NZME Ltd. (2023). *NZM Price history*. NZX. Retrieved October 29, 2023, from https://www.nzx.com/instruments/NZM

Sky Network Television

Sky broadcasts sports and entertainment. For the period under review, there were changes to the network's leadership team. In January, Kirstin Jones took up the role of company secretary; in March, Jennifer Sepull and Lauren Quaintance joined as chief technology officer and chief media and data officer, respectively. Ciara McGuigan will join the team as chief financial officer in March 2024.

In March, following a consultation period, Sky confirmed that it would cut 170 local roles from the organisation: 90 employees would be lost from the technology and content operations team and 80 from customer care. The customer support roles in New Zealand would fall from 180 to 100, but 200 new helpdesk roles would be outsourced to workers in the Philippines. The network also disclosed that it had secured outsourcing partnerships with international agencies, Probe CX Group and Tata Consulting Services. Overall, the total support staff grew to 300 to assist with the rollout of *Sky Box* and *Sky Pod*. The restructure was expected to be completed by 30 June. The company expected to incur a one-off cost of $6 million and to save $6 million per year from 2024 (Keall, 2023c).

In the annual report for the 2023 financial year ending 30 June (2023a), total revenue increased by 2.4% to $754.1 million (2022: $736.1 million) and NPAT was $51.0 million (2022: $62.2 million). The continued revenue growth saw the Board announce a dividend of 9 cents per share, taking the total dividend for the year to 15 cents. The number of Sky customers also grew to 1,015,125 (2022: 990,761), 514,982 and 467,516 were from *Sky Box* and streaming services (e.g., NEON and Sky Sport Now), respectively. However, Chairman Bowman observed, "Rapid change and growing complexity continue to shape the global media sector. Nowhere is this more evident than in the international subscription video on demand (SVOD) space, as providers feel the pressure of needing to generate meaningful financial returns in the face of significantly increased costs, market saturation and customer fragmentation" (Sky New Zealand, 2023a, p. 6).

The year also saw changes to the Board (Table 5). Belinda Rowe was appointed to the role of independent director, effective 1 March 2023. Her past roles were at Publicis Media, Zenith, Mojo and O2 Telefonica (Sky New Zealand, 2023b). She filled the vacancy left by Geraldine McBride, who retired on 2 November 2022. Other members of the Board are Phillip Bowman, Keith Smith, Michael Darcey, Joan Withers and Mark Buckman. Of the six directors, three had a relevant interest in the business: Bowan, Darcey and Smith (and parties associated with them) held 400,000, 125,000, and 21,260 shares in the network, respectively (Sky New Zealand, 2023a, p. 68). As at 17 June 2023, a financial institution and a Crown entity owned 18.55% of Sky's shares (Table 6). During the year, Osmium Partners LLC dropped from the substantial product holders' list.

Table 5: Sky's Board Members and Their Positions on Other Companies (as of 30 June 2023)

Director	Position	Company
Philip Bowman	Independent chairman and shareholder	Sky
	Director	Better Capital PCC Limited
	Director	KMD Brands Limited (listed)
	Chair	Tegel Group Holdings Limited
	Director	Ferrovial SA (listed)
	Director	Majid al Futtaim Holding LLC
	Chair	Majid al Futtaim Properties LLC
	Director	Majid al Futtaim Capital LLC
	Director	Tom Tom Holdings, Inc.
	Director	Vinula Pty. Limited
	Director	Vinula Super Fund Pty. Limited
Michael Darcey	Independent director and deputy chair	Sky
	Chair	Arqiva Group Limited
	Chair	British Gymnastics
	Shareholder	Premier League Basketball UK
Keith Smith	Independent director and shareholder	Sky
	Chair	Anderson & O'Leary Limited and associated companies
	Chair	Enterprise Group Holdings Limited and associated companies
	Director	Goodman (NZ) Limited and associated companies
	Chair	H J Asmuss & Co Limited and associated companies
	Chair	Healthcare Holdings Limited and associated companies
	Chair	Mobile Health Group Limited
	Member of Advisory Board	Tax Traders Limited
	Director	Gwendoline Holdings Limited (non-trading)
Joan Withers	Independent director	Sky
	Chair	The Warehouse Group Limited and associated companies
	Director	ANZ Bank New Zealand Limited

	Trustee	Louise Perkins Foundation
	Director	On Being Bold Limited
	Director	Origin Energy Limited
Mark Buckman	Independent director	Sky
	Chair	OzTAM Pty. Limited
	Director	Barangaroo Advisory Pty. Limited
	Advisor and shareholder	Honed Real Estate Pty. Limited
	Advisor and shareholder	MSVN Technologies, LLC
Belinda Rowe	Independent director	Sky
	Nominated Director	Soprano Design Limited
	Non-Executive Director	ARN Media Limited
	Non-Executive Director	Sydney Swans Limited
	Non-Executive Director	Temple & Webster Group Limited
	Director	Belinda Rowe Consulting Pty. Limited
	Director	Rowe-Cuthbert Nominees Pty. Limited
	Non-Executive Director	3P Learning Limited

Source: Sky New Zealand. (2023). *Sky's annual report for 2023*. NZX. http://nzx-prod-s7fsd7f98s.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/SKT/416939/401180.pdf

Table 6: Sky Substantial Product Holders

Substantial product shareholders	As of 30 June 2022		As of 30 June 2023 and 17 July 2023	
	Number of shares held	% of shares held	Number of shares held	% of shares held
Jupiter Asset Management Ltd and its related bodies corporate	15,802,241	9.04%	15,802,241	9.04%
Accident Compensation Corporation	14,584,144	8.35%	13,845,508	9.51%
Osmium Partners, LLC	10,144,702	5.81%		

Source: Sky New Zealand. (2023). *Sky's annual report for 2023.* NZX. http://nzx-prod-s7fsd7f98s.s3-website-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/SKT/416939/401180.pdf

Of note, in August, CE Moloney issued an apology over technical issues with *Sky Box* and *Sky Pod* technologies. Other announcements included the signing of a new multi-year deal with Warner Bros. Discovery for content and the rebranding of its free-to-air channel, *Prime*, into *Sky Open* and *Prime News* into *News First*. Also, on 13 October, Sky received a highly conditional, non-binding preliminary expression of interest

(NBIO) from a third party to acquire the business. As a result, its shares grew by 14% after the trading halt was lifted, trading up by 34 cents to a value of $2.81 per share (Pullar-Strecker, 2023c). Given the NBIO, the Board paused the share buyback programme, which had been announced in March. On 8 November, the Board announced:

> Yesterday Sky received an updated NBIO from the third party (which remained highly conditional and non-binding), proposing a transaction at a value range which falls short of the Board's view of the fair intrinsic value of Sky and, based on recent unsolicited feedback, the view of a number of Sky's institutional shareholders. The Board has advised the third party accordingly, and has ended discussions in respect of the NBIO. (Sky New Zealand, 2023c)

Consequently, the Board recommenced the share buyback programme. On 10 November, Sky's shares closed at NZD$2.70 and the 52-week range was a high of NZD$2.98 and a low of NZD$2.22 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sky Stock Performance Graph November 2021–November 2022

Source: Sky New Zealand. *SKT price history*. NZX. Retrieved November 13, 2023, from https://www.nzx.com/instruments/SKT

MediaWorks

MediaWorks is largely a foreign-owned radio and outdoor advertising business. Stuff's Susan Edmunds reported that the company is owned by an American investment management firm, Oaktree Capital's Tokyo Opportunities B.V (59.25%), an Australian private equity firm, Quadrant Private Equity (39.49%), and Cam Wallace (1.28%). The Board consists of Ryan Boers (investment director at Quadrant Private Equity), Jonas Mizschke (co-owner of Oaktree Capital) and Barclay Nettlefold (CE of QMS) (Edmunds, 2023).

In January, CE Cam Wallace told staff that the company was not immune to the economic climate and that the workforce needed to be reduced "by up to 90 roles" (NZ Herald, 2023). Shortly after, in February, Wallace announced that he would step down in the middle of the year. Later, it was reported that he took up an executive role at Qantas. Wendy Palmer assumed the role of acting CE. There were speculations about her departure from the company, but in August, she was appointed as the permanent CE.

On 30 March 2023, after celebrating its first anniversary, Today FM was pulled off air. Palmer told staff that there was a "gap" between the revenue generated and the operation costs. She went on to say that the decision was "taken out of our hands by our board and our shareholders" (Currie, 2023m). However, the abrupt announcement and lack of warning to affected employees resulted in legal claims. On 22 September 2023, it was reported that MediaWorks had settled the legal action brought by a group of 17 former employees (Currie, 2023e).

Shortly after, Stuff reported that the company's directors were referred to the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) for failing to file a financial statement for the 31 December 2022 financial year. Initially, MediaWorks' accounts were due on 31 May 2023; however, an extension was awarded till 1 September 2023. After that date had passed, an MBIE spokesperson said the company was referred to the integrity and enforcement team (Edmunds, 2023). The *New Zealand Herald* also reported that there was speculation that the company may sell its outdoor advertising arm (Currie, 2023g). On 20 October 2023, MediaWorks released financial statements showing that the group suffered a loss of $125.9 million in the year to 31 December 2022 (2021: $4.9 million loss). Of note, its assets fell to $140.6 million (2021: $264.7 million) and had a negative working capital of $19.4 million (2021: negative

$2.2 million). Its auditor, PwC, noted that there was "material uncertainty" related to its ongoing operations, explaining "the ability of the Group to support its ongoing operations over the forecast period to 30 June 2025 is dependent on a successful renegotiation of its lending terms with the lenders, including revised facility limits and covenants, and to meet the terms of any revised agreements ongoing" (MediaWorks, 2023, p. 37)

Notable departures from the media outlet include chair Wayne Stevenson, Director of News and Talk Dallas Gurney, Chief People Officer Paula Williams, Chief Financial Officer Skye Daniels and Commercial Director Liz Fraser.

Discovery New Zealand

Discovery New Zealand is owned by the global media and entertainment company, Warner Bros. Discovery. Glen Kyne is a senior vice president and head of networks for Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. In July, it was reported that revenue at Discovery NZ for the 2022 financial year rose to $159 million (2021: $141.4 million), but the local company recorded a net loss of $34.8 million, which was up $800,000 from the previous financial year (Dunkley, 2023b).

On 18 August 2023, Newsroom's Mark Jennings reported that Kyne had asked the government for financial support while the company transitioned from a broadcaster to a digital-led business. Minister Jackson acknowledged that a meeting had taken place but did not disclose the agenda of the discussion, citing "commercial sensitivity." Following the publication of the Newsroom story, NZME published an in-depth interview with Kyne. Speaking to Editor-at-Large Shayne Currie, Kyne denied seeking financial assistance from the government and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to seek "change for the benefit of the entire New Zealand sector via relief from the significant Kordia fees that all broadcast media organisations pay to a state-owned company for broadcast infrastructure" (Currie, 2023k). He also detailed that the reported after-tax losses on the New Zealand balance sheet included operation and technology costs that applied to the wider Asia-Pacific business. Kyne went on to observe that the company was embarking on a strategic pivot to reflect people's changing behaviour towards media consumption, disclosing that ThreeNow would have a new interface by the end of the year. The growth in the digital space gave him "optimism for the future." Kyne also acknowledged that the prevailing economic conditions meant that the company would be “incredibly prudent” with its outgoings.

On 25 August, *Newshub* stopped producing the shows *AM Early* and *Newshub Live at 11:30am*. However, there were no job losses. *Newshub’s* Senior Director of News, Sarah Bristow, explained that audiences were increasingly consuming news via digital and social platforms and, to respond to the changing environment, resources were redirected (Currie, 2023h). Then, on 18 October, it was announced that Bristow was stepping down after nine years with the business and about four years as the company’s head of news (Bevan, 2023). She is expected to leave the role in mid-February 2024. Later, on 26 October, Bristow announced to staff that Three’s 7pm show, *The Project*, would finish at the end of the year. She stated, “If the proposed change is confirmed, we will design a redefined news show in the 7pm timeslot as part of the broader *Newshub* proposition” (Waiwiri-Smith, 2023).

Discovery NZ’s American parent’s portfolio of content and brands are available in over 220 countries and are spread across television, film and streaming. Its 2022 full-year consolidated results showed that total revenue was US$33.8 billion and costs and expenses were US$41.2 billion, resulting in a net loss of US$7.4 billion (Warner Bros. Discovery, Inc, 2023a). However, the full-year total adjusted EBITDA was US$7.7 billion. The company trades on the NASDAQ as WBD. On 27 October 2023, its shares closed at US$9.55, and the 52-week range was US$8.82 and $16.34 (Figure 3). Its Board remained unchanged (Table 7). Of note, in July, Chris Light stepped down as Chairman and CEO of CNN Worldwide. In August 2023, Mark Thompson, the former director-general of the BBC and president and CEO of The New York Times Company was appointed as his replacement (Warner Bros. Discovery, Inc, 2023b).

Figure 3: Warner Bros. Discovery Stock Performance Graph for 19 October 2022–19 October 2023

Source: Warner Bros. Discovery, Inc. (2023). *Stock quote and chart*. Retrieved October 27, 2023, from https://ir.wbd.com/stock-information/stock-quote-and-chart/default.aspx

Table 7: Warner Bros. Discovery Board of Directors

Directors	Position
Samuel A. Di Piazza, Jr	Chairman
David Zaslav	President and Chief Executive Officer, and Director
Robert R. Bennett	Independent Director
Li Haslett Chen	Independent Director
Richard W. Fisher	Independent Director
Paul A. Gould	Independent Director
Debra L. Lee	Independent Director
Dr. John C. Malone	Independent Director
Fazal Merchant	Independent Director
Steven A. Miron	Independent Director
Steven O. Newhouse	Independent Director
Paula A. Price	Independent Director
Geoffrey Y. Yang	Independent Director

Source: Warner Bros. Discovery. Inc. (2023). *2022 Annual Report*. https://s201.q4cdn.com/336605034/files/doc_financials/2022/ar/wbd_2022-annual-report-wrap-on-form-10-k.pdf

Spark Sport

On 16 December 2022, Spark announced that it had concluded content partnering discussions with TVNZ. This resulted in the free-to-air broadcaster taking over most of Spark Sport's content (subject to rights holder agreement, from 1 July 2023). The contents included New Zealand Cricket; England and Wales Cricket; NFL; MotoGP; World Rally Championship; WTA; US Open Tennis Championship; Suncorp Super Netball 2023 Finals and Australian Diamonds Netball; FIBA; Women's Super League, FA Cup and Arnold Clark Cup; Diamond League; Ladies European Tour; United Rugby Championship; Manu Samoa Rugby; and UEFA Euros 2024 & 2028. The UEFA Champions League, Europa League and Europa Conference League are available on the beIN SPORTS Connect App (Spark, 2023). As a result of the closure, Spark wrote off $52 million, which was from sports rights it had paid for through to 2028 (Long, 2023).

Back in March 2019, before Spark Sport entered the pay TV sports market, Sky TV had a monopoly. In an interview with Stuff's David Long, New Zealand Cricket's CE David White lamented, "I think Spark did change the market and it did make sports rights more competitive" (Long, 2022). Long, himself, added, "Up until recently, TVNZ and TV3 had backed away from live sport. They could not compete with Sky TV for rights and did not have the space on their channels to dedicate to live sport. But the rise in popularity [of] streaming platforms like Netflix forced broadcasters to think again about sport[s]. Only news and live sport can now fall into the category of being 'appointment viewing', everything else can be watched on demand."

Sports Entertainment Network

Sports Entertainment Group is a sports media content and entertainment business operating in Australia and New Zealand. It has 65 station networks covering all Australian states and territories and New Zealand. It trades on the ASX under SEG. On 27 October 2023, its closing price was AU$0.240 and had a 52-week range between AU$0.170 and AU$0.275. The Board is made up of Colm O'Brien, Andrew Moffat, CE Craig Hutchison, Chris Giannopoulos, Ronald Hall (alternate for Moffat), Jodie Simm (company secretary), and is chaired by Craig Coleman (Sports Entertainment Group Limited, 2023a). The company has platforms on radio, print, television, online, stadium and events. The New Zealand network, SENZ, launched in 2021, and much of its focus has centred on building brand awareness and growing its audience. The company offers coverage of sporting events, including cricket fixtures, English Premier League matches, A-League matches and 2023 Super Rugby Pacific games, through radio and digital channels. In the financial report for the year ended 30 June 2023, the group's total revenue was AU$118.0 million (2022: AU$109.0

million), NLAT was AU$9.3 million (2022: AU$3.2 million) and underlying EBITDA was AU$4.8 million (2022: AU$10.3 million) (Sports Entertainment Group Limited, 2023b).

Independent outlets

In general, independent outlets gain revenue from advertising, subscriptions, sponsorships, license fees, donations and memberships. In this report, the focus is on eight independents: Allied Press, Asia Pacific Report, Crux, National Business Review (NBR), Newsroom, Scoop, Stuff and The Spinoff (for more information see the Print and Online section).

Of note, in January 2023, Duncan Greive, the founder and CE of The Spinoff, decided to resign to take up the position of senior writer within the publication (Greive, 2023c). In September 2023, Greive conducted an interview with the NBR's Todd Scott, in which he asked about Stuff's January article that there was a new shareholder for NBR (Morrison, 2023). Scott replied: "Now, there's a lot of rumours and speculation over a period of time. I've never been in negotiations with News Corp…I have no intention of exiting the business in the foreseeable future. It's in fine shape. I'm not interested in selling" (Greive, 2023a). Scott also explained his recent decision to stop publishing opinion pieces: "I think if you look at the New Zealand media landscape, there's just so much opinion out there, and I really don't think people care…the NBR provides business news and analysis that allows our audience to make their own informed decisions."

Also, like other publishers this year, Stuff had to cut costs and restructure, which saw a leadership overhaul and a strategic pivot. In June 2023, CE Sinead Boucher announced she would step down from her position to take up the role of executive chair and publisher. Replacing Boucher was former NZME executive, Laura Maxwell. The organisation was restructured into three divisions: Stuff Digital headed by Nadia Tolich; Stuff Masthead Publishing led by Joanna Norris; and Stuff Brand Connections helmed by Matt Headland. The company shifted towards local paywalls for three publications (*The Press*, *The Post;* and *Waikato Times*) and retained a central, ad-funded news website, stuff.co.nz (Buckingham-Jones, 2023). The *New Zealand Herald* reported that the restructuring had seen 16 people laid off in the print production team and a further 28 roles were impacted. Notable exits included Mark Stevens (Head of News), Caitlin Cherry (*The Post* editor), Eloise Gibson (Climate Change editor);, and Alison Mau (The #MeTooNZ project editor). Mau, however, continued to write a weekly column for the *Sunday Star-Times*. It should also be mentioned that on 10 October, Federico Magrin (2023) for Stuff reported that over 40 Allied Press journalists were going on strike over pay.

3. Television

Sarah Baker

Introduction

During 2022, the story that dominated broadcasting news was the proposed merger of RNZ and TVNZ, which was beginning to take legislative form. However, on 8 February 2023, Prime Minister Chris Hipkins announced that the RNZ and TVNZ merger was called off. He said that the merger was to be scrapped because the Government needed to re-focus on the cost of living crisis and remarked that "Support for public media needs to be at a lower cost and without such significant structural change" (RNZ, 2023f). Controversy had plagued the merger from when it was first proposed in January 2020. TVNZ's position later in the policy development process was ambivalent in that advice came from individuals unlikely to be enthusiastic about the initiative:

> Within weeks of taking over as TVNZ chief executive in March 2022, former National government minister Simon Power turned to two trusted advisers from his Beehive days to work at a high level with him to deal with the Government's planned merger of the company with RNZ…a surprise… that on such a sensitive policy the new man would select advisers so clearly from the blue corner. (Murphy, 2023c)

In April 2023, Minister of Broadcasting Willie Jackson confirmed that he wanted a "stronger commitment from the state broadcaster to reflect the New Zealand identity" (Currie, 2023). Further to this declaration, the Minister wanted to see more 'New Zealand' stories and for such programmes to be featured on prime time. In the process of getting ready for the merger, the government spent more than $16 million in preparation, including millions of dollars on consultants who created the business case for the merger (Pullar-Strecker, 2023a). After pulling the plug on the merger, the government promised to provide fresh funding for RNZ and NZ on Air (Dunkley, 2023a). The proposed merger had evolved through several advisory groups and had two successive broadcasting ministers, Kris Faafoi and Willie Jackson, trying to shepherd it through. Many had wondered if the merger would continue when then Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ranked "the project not number one on the government agenda" in December 2022 (Moir, 2022). When the Labour government began to prioritise other policies, the National Party continued to attack them (Manhire, 2023).

Without the merger, there was talk that all the good work should not be lost: "It was critical, said one TVNZ source, that the process the broadcaster had been through - talking at length about reaching audiences less well served by the status quo, especially - did not get thrown out with the merger bathwater" (Manhire, 2023). In this context, Willie Jackson said in April that he would consider another Charter for TVNZ (Donnell & Peacock, 2023).

Overall, the television broadcasting industry continues to experience pressure from SVOD services that have cut into advertising and viewing budgets. The revenue from television broadcasting in New Zealand is set to be $1.4bn in 2023, a growth of 2.7% from 2022. The number of internet connections across New Zealand reflects demand for alternative media platforms, which suggests a switch away from traditional television broadcasts. This makes it difficult for television broadcasters to maintain traditional audiences. This trend and the continued use of SVOD threaten the revenue stream for traditional broadcasters (IBISworld, 2023). The biggest companies in the television broadcasting industry in New Zealand are Sky Network Television, TVNZ and Discovery NZ.

Content and consumption trends

Survey sample research commissioned by NZ On Air verifies the trend for audiences to take up streaming and on demand services. Digital media consumption continues to grow, and there is a strong demarcation between audiences that watch online videos and those that watch SVOD. The remaining audiences still watch linear television. In terms of the market share for average daily usage, 68% use video, 50% linear and 57% SVOD. Overall, the greatest growth has been in the number of on demand viewers. This has largely been driven by TVNZ+, which has the largest growth of any of the sites, with a 27% daily share of the television broadcasting audience (NZ On Air, 2023).

NZ On Air research conducted in 2023 throws up interesting viewing changes (NZ On Air, 2023d). For the first time since the start of such research in 2014, there are significant declines in traditional media use among the over-60 age group. The 40- to 59-year-olds are increasingly accessing digital content, which means that traditional mediums are losing key audience segments. Age cohort differences in the way that audiences watch content are still evident but diminishing. Thus, on demand viewing by older audiences used to be unusual but is becoming a normal daily routine. In the younger demographic, the under-40s, the shift to digital viewing has also increased. Much of this can be attributed to TVNZ converting its older evening audience from linear viewers to TVNZ+ users. This migration and re-direction of the older audience to digital viewing is creating more pressure on TVNZ financially as it runs less advertising on TVNZ+. This in turn creates more financial problems for the organisation. Another related trend is that prime time no longer dominates the broadcast schedule. The 6pm bulletin still retains a million viewers at times; however, older prime-time viewers are also now turning to streaming (Grieve, 2023d). The decline in linear television use continues as it no longer attracts the biggest audience for peak viewing time between 6pm to 10.30pm (NZ On Air, 2023d). With the split in audiences across the various platforms, the television audience is now splintered into niche audiences.

Television and streaming: Key players

TVNZ

TVNZ is New Zealand's state-owned, commercially funded broadcaster, which the government had planned to merge with RNZ. Its channels include TVNZ 1, TVNZ 2, Duke and the online streaming platform TVNZ OnDemand, which was rebranded in 2022 to TVNZ+.

In June 2023, Minister for Broadcasting and Media Willie Jackson appointed new board members at TVNZ. Alastair Carruthers took up the role of Chair, with Ripeka Evans (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu, Te Aupouri and Ngāti Porou) joining him as Deputy Chair. Alastair brought expertise in financial management, communications and digital technology and systems to the Board. Ripeka Evans was described as an experienced leader with a strong background in television, broadcasting and Māori development. Meg Matthews (Ngāi Tahu) and Aliesha Staples were reappointed as directors of TVNZ and are joined on the Board by lawyer and former broadcaster Linda Clark and experienced governor and strategic thinker John Quirk. The terms of Alastair Carruthers, Ripeka Evans, and Aliesha Staples are three years (from 1 July 2023); the terms of Linda Clark, Meg Matthews and John Quirk are for two years (from 1 July 2023). A further member will be sought later in 2023 for a 2024 start (Beehive.govt.nz, 2023).

In May 2023, TVNZ announced that Cate Slater would be Chief Transformation Officer. This newly created role was an executive position intended to aid TVNZ's transition from a broadcast-based business to a digital-first media organisation. Nevak Rogers stepped into Slater's role as Acting Director of Content. Nevak had led TVNZ's local content team for four years (TVNZ, 2023e). In June, TVNZ also reported that from 1 July the full suite of sports rights would move from Spark Sport to TVNZ. A new sports hub was established on the TVNZ+ platform, which housed all of TVNZ's sports rights in one place. In late 2022, TVNZ had announced that after Spark Sport's exit from the streaming market, the broadcaster would take over the transmission of the multiple sports they had available on their platform (TVNZ, 2023f).

In July 2023, TVNZ Chief Executive Simon Power stepped down as CEO of TVNZ. On leaving, he said there "were four key areas of focus that were complete, including the merger work, the return of live sport to free-to-air TVNZ and board sign-off on an all-of-business transformation, including major technology change" (Currie, 2023b). Also in July, TVNZ released a statement of intent for the next four years ending June 2027 (TVNZ, 2023c). There were three strategic priorities listed. These were to extend digital audience reach, accelerate digital revenue and focus on a sustainable future business. Challenges identified for TVNZ were the recessionary economic outlook, inflation and labour costs. TVNZ would respond by:

- Undergoing business-wide cost management initiatives in the short term.
- Including cost transformation as a key workstream in the five-year horizons business transformation plan.
- Developing new methods of revenue generation, for example, through sales transformation plans and improved advertiser-audience matching.
- Balancing its schedule for optimal viewership and commercial return.

In the statement of intent, TVNZ signalled it would aim to change viewers' consumption habits. The global decline in television broadcast audiences was noted with growing pressures from streaming platforms and social media. Also noted was that TVNZ's extensive content library was archived on an ageing platform. TVNZ is responding to the issue by beginning work on the IP platform build. This will enable them to meet audiences where they want to watch. The statement reaffirmed a commitment to tell stories of New Zealand and New Zealanders that would differentiate TVNZ from international competitors. The intention was to ensure that TVNZ+ remains the SVOD platform of choice for New Zealanders (including growth and projected growth targets from 585k weekly reach at the end of FY2022 to 632k at the end of FY2023). The report also discussed trust in media and the JMAD *Trust in News* report. This found declining audience trust and high avoidance of news due to perceptions of bias and sensationalism. In response to these issues, TVNZ will respond by:

- Keeping front of mind the company's Responsible Broadcasting pillar, including the commitment to be independent, fair, and trusted editorial.
- Remaining committed to reaching younger audiences through platforms.
- Exploring partnership opportunities with other trusted local news media, such as RNZ.
- Supporting the Government's aim to regulate global players such as Google and Meta.
- Undertaking a news marketing campaign with key messages around trust and credibility.
- Measuring trust both internally and externally.

A Statement of Performance Expectations was released by TVNZ in July 2023. The statement is for expectations for the year ending 30 June 2024, and the estimate of the commercial value of the Crown's investment in TVNZ was $240.1m. This is an $8.9m decrease compared to the estimate of commercial value on 30 June 2022 of $249.0m. This decrease reflected a reduction in the value of land and buildings and lower forecast operating cashflows (TVNZ, 2023d). In August 2023, TVNZ confirmed that it had experienced significant declines in advertising revenue and that cuts were made to stem this. It estimated that, by 2024, its profit fall would be $25.6m with an operating loss within that of $6m (Murphy, 2023a).

In September, TVNZ was planning significant cuts to content production operational spending and programmes. Many future projects were also under review, and proposed pay rises for the executives and top-earning staff were scrapped. TVNZ was also putting a hiring freeze on vacant roles until 2024. They forecasted a loss of $15.6 million in the 2023/24 fiscal year. The previous CEO Kevin Kenrick had persuaded the Government in 2019 to allow TVNZ to forego paying dividends to the Crown so as to allow investment in programmes and digital services.

In September, it was also announced that Carol Hirschfield would take up a new position as executive producer of *Breakfast* later in the year (Jack, 2023). It was also announced that month that TVNZ would significantly cut their programmes, production, and operational spending due to reduced advertising revenue. Along with these changes, TVNZ had a tender out for "a major overhaul of its digital technology and internet infrastructure" (Peacock, 2023b).

In October, TVNZ reported that for the year ended June 2023 net profit after tax was $1.7 million, compared to $7.9 million for the previous 12-month period. This 78% drop was attributed to a worsening economic climate and advertising revenue decline (Weekes, 2023).

As mentioned, another important development for TVNZ was the acquisition of Spark Sport's material. Spark Sport closed on 30 June 2023, and its content is now available on TVNZ+. This includes New Zealand cricket, England and Wales cricket, NFL, MotoGP, World Rally Championship, WTA, US Open Tennis Championship, Suncorp Super Netball 2023 Finals and Australian Diamonds Netball, FIBA, Women's Super League, FA Cup and Arnold Clark Cup, Diamond League, Ladies European Tour Golf, United Rugby Championship, and Manu Samoa Rugby (Spark Sport, 2023).

The monthly digi report for August 2023 showed that TVNZ+ continued an upward trend. Weekly streams grew 31% year-on-year from 2022, and the livestream monthly reach grew 14%. By August, TVNZ+ was reaching 394k livestream viewers (TVNZ, 2023a). In November 2023, the interim chief executive Brent McAnulty announced that TVNZ+ had a reach of 1.25 million New Zealanders, with the network reaching 2.5 million weekly. TVNZ announced the introduction of several classical favourite programmes, reality TV shows and a range of documentaries. Three's *The Project* was cut, while TVNZ's *Seven Sharp* returns in 2024 (Rohan, 2023b).

Freeview

Freeview continues to be a free-to-air platform in which the channels and features are subscription-free. It is built into television set-top boxes and recorded. Freeview partners with broadcasters and networks and offers over 20 TV and radio stations. Freeview is not a broadcaster, but it brings together many of the channels and programming that other broadcasters screen. It has programmes from Discovery, Eden and Rush.

Warner Bros Discovery

Warner Brothers Discovery runs channels Three and Bravo, streaming service ThreeNow, multiplatform news and current affairs service *Newshub* as well as Three+1, Bravo+1, Eden, and Rush in the local market.

In February, Sky and Warner Bros. Discovery announced a joint sports coverage initiative. In the same month, Discovery ANZ announced an extension of their partnership to deliver live and free sporting events over the coming months, with selected coverage from the NRL, SailGP and the Repco Supercars Championship—free-to-air on Three and ThreeNow, as well as across Sky platforms (Scoop, 2023).

In July 2023, Discovery NZ reported a loss of $35m for the year to 31 December 2022. A spokesperson for the organisation said, "the result filed with the Companies Office did not fully reflect the total model of the local operation and it was satisfied with the performance of its Australia and New Zealand entity". The strategy for the company remained the same, which was to grow the scale of its digital offerings. They reported that streaming volumes were up 39% year-on-year, and the platform reach was up 12% for the same period (Pullar-Strecker, 2023d).

In regard to the cost of moving a broadcaster to a digital business, Warner Bros Discovery, the global conglomerate owner of Three, asked for government support to make the transition. It is believed that the company's financial position deteriorated as the economy got worse during the year (Jennings, 2023). In October 2023, Warner Bros. Discovery ANZ and Google announced that *Newshub* premium content would feature on Google News Showcase. This brings the total number of New Zealand publishers on Google News Showcase to 49.

Furthermore, in October, Warner Bros Discovery announced that *The Project* would be cancelled and replaced in the new year by a "redefined news show" that would take over the 7pm slot. Part of the decision to do this stemmed from the transitioning of the broadcast business to a digitally led model. The transformation of the newsroom was equally crucial as they moved from a linear mode of broadcasting to digital platforms (Newshub, 2023).

Netflix and Disney/Streaming Platforms

There is already intense competition among streaming services in New Zealand. In September, the Hayu service entered the race with the provision of several reality TV shows, including titles such as *Below Deck*, *Vanderpump Rules* and the United States version of *The Real Housewives*. There is a range of strong competition in these areas, with Apple TV+, Disney+, YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sky, TVNZ, Three, AMC+ and others offering streaming content and platforms. New Zealand Rugby has also launched NZR+ with its own unique content.

There are a variety of streaming services available to New Zealand audiences comprising free and paid models (Schulz, 2023). With the number of channels, decisions to watch can come down to whether a given streaming channel has more variety and choice. For example, Rohan (2023a) says that the ThreeNow platform has some iconic titles but does not have the range of other streaming platforms and can be difficult to operate. The Sky Go channel has lots of local and international movies and TV programmes; however, the consumer must subscribe to Sky and have a Sky Box. If one does not want to continue the service, the equipment needs to be returned. YouTube Premium is good for those who like music and watch music festivals, although the channel is not as popular or as well-known as others. Prime Video has a large range of programmes and other perks like music and gaming apps, though the service is not the easiest to use and a lot of titles are not available in New Zealand. Disney+ appears to be more aimed at small children and teens, as the channel contains quite a few family-friendly titles. Netflix, as one of the original streaming platforms, has a large range of content that often ends up at awards shows. Apple TV+ has put a lot of money into investing in its own content and is competitive with the other platforms. Neon is one of the less popular platforms; however, in partnership with HBO, it has provided a lot of programming with "attention-grabbing shows like *Euphoria*, *The Last of Us*, *House of the Dragon*, and *The White Lotus*" (Rohan, 2023a). According to Rohan, "TVNZ+ has exceeded expectations with its world-class streaming offering" (Rohan, 2023a).

The competition for streaming services is going to increase further in 2024 as the new "super streamer" service Max has been "confirmed" for New Zealand. This will provide even more competition for Sky, with new HBO shows, a second Game of Thrones spinoff, and a series based on the Harry Potter books. Max is due to launch in May 2024 and will compete with the global streaming heavyweights of Disney+, Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video for audiences (Keall, 2023a).

Table 8: Pricing of Aotearoa New Zealand's Streaming and On-Demand Services 2023

Company	Pricing per month
Acorn	$7.99 per month or $79.00 annually.
Apple TV+	$14.99 per month (Apple One $29.95).
Amazon Prime Video	$8.99 per month.
Disney+	$14.99 per month or $149.99 annually.
Netflix	$12.99 - $24.99 per month.
Neon	Basic $12.99 per month, standard $17.99 per month, or $179.99 annually.
Play Stuff	Free.
Sky Sport Now	$44.99 per month. Week Pass $24.99. Annual Pass $449.99.
Spark Sport	Closed on 30 June 2023.
ThreeNow	Free.
TVNZ+	Free.
YouTube Premium	Individual $17.99 per month. Family $29.99 per month. Student $10.99 per month.
Sky Go	Included in Sky Subscription (price varies upon plan).
Freeview on Demand	Free.
AnimeLab/now called Funimation	Premium plan is $12.49 per month or $124.99 annually.
Shudder	$6.67 per month.
DAZN	$14.99 per month.
Whakaata Māori +	Free.
AMC+	Between $7.99 - $9.99 per month.
Tubi	Free.
Docplay	$7.99 per month.
Arovision	Films range between $4.99 - $7.99.
NZ on Screen	Free.
Hayu	$8.99 per month ($43.99 for six months or $79.99 for an annual subscription).
beamafilm	Free subscription through select Aotearoa libraries.
Whakaata Māori	Free with registration required.
Filmzie	Free.
Waterbear Network	Free.

iwonder	$6.99 per month or $69.99 annually.
Curiosity Stream	$3.50 per month on standard plan and $8.18 per month under premium 4k plan.
Crunchyroll and HiDive	$7.99 per month, $9.99 for premium subscription tier. Two-week free trial.
Mubi	Flat rate of $12.99 or free account to browse the database and talk with other film fans on MUBI forums.

Sky Sport

In March 2023, Sky confirmed that it was restructuring and letting go around 170 local roles. Ninety of these were from technology and content operations and 80 were from customer care. Many of these jobs have been outsourced to Probe CX, a Manila-based call centre and Indian company Tata. This was predicted to save Sky $6 million per year. Sky CEO Sophie Moloney attributed the restructure to a major change of strategy for the company (involving the roll out of the new Sky Box and Sky Pod). In August, Sky reported a $51 million profit for the year ending 30 June, an 18% drop from the previous annual result (Pullar-Strecker, 2023b).

Sky launched its long-awaited Sky Box to customers in April 2023. The Sky Box is an upgrade option for customers that offers satellite, on-demand, and streaming. The Sky Box allows customers to watch Sky TV and apps such as Netflix or Disney+ in the same place. It costs $200 or an ongoing monthly fee of $10.

Sky also launched a small Sky Pod for $100. This does not have a hard drive to record content and is pitched to streaming customers. It receives shows through streaming instead of satellite. It lacks access to TVNZ channels which Chris Keall attributes to a spat between Sky and TVNZ (Keall, 2023d). Keall (2023d) noted that the new box is small and easy to install and remove compared to the older decoders. It has voice controls, supports 4k ultra-high definition and allows customers to download any apps available for Android. However, Keall (2023d) also noted that it moves slowly when changing channels, the voice control is “hit-and-miss” and fast-forwarding and rewinding are not easy to control.

In May, Sky Television announced it was working with Stuff to deliver “a multimedia cross-channel offering dedicated to the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup” (Stuff Sports Reporters, 2023). This would be located on Stuff and feature 26 games for live streaming, along with commentary and news of the event. Previously, Sky has partnered with broadcasters rather than digital news outlets. Sky had said that this initiative would attract more fans to the world's biggest event for women's sport. The partnering of Sky and Stuff also provided significant reach for advertisers.

In August, Sky Sport's free-to-air channel Prime was renamed Sky Open. Early evening bulletin Prime News, fronted by Eric Young, would become News First (Waiwiri-Smith, 2023a).

Spark Sport

In December 2022, Spark announced it would be terminating Spark Sport from 1 July 2023. Spark's content partner TVNZ would then hold the majority of Spark Sports content. This has meant that TVNZ has rights for all Black Caps, White Ferns and Super Smash 20/20 cricket rights until the 2025/2026 season.

Spark attributed their decision to the escalation of content rights costs and a change in investment strategy. The termination of Spark Sport has left Sky as the only pay-TV or subscription-based sports media broadcaster in New Zealand.

New Zealand Herald commentator Gregor Paul (2023) wrote that gaining cricket rights was a tactical error for Spark Sport. It had failed "to realise the true extent of production costs and likely returns" (p. A37). He also attributed the termination to CEO Jolie Hodson not having the same passion for the streaming arm of the business as her predecessor Simon Moutter, who stood down in April 2019.

4. Radio and Audio Media

Rufus McEwan and Peter Hoar

Radio listenership in 2023

According to the second survey of 2023, radio listening figures were generally consistent with those in 2022. The total number of weekly listeners for New Zealand radio was reported as 3,661,800 (RNZ, 2023a), only 1,800 fewer than the same total presented last year (McEwan & Hoar, 2022)[1]. Within this total, the combined number of listeners for both RNZ stations, National and Concert, was lower than the previous year; 648,700 people aged 10+ listened to RNZ in a typical week (RNZ, 2023a), down 26,300. Conversely, the commercial radio sector saw a slight increase in the total number of listeners (3,413,900 weekly) when compared with 2022 (3,409,200) (GfK, 2022, 2023). As an overall trend, this result once again indicates a reasonable level of audience stability or, at worst, a small decline once population growth is also taken into consideration.

Within the commercial radio sector, the same radio stations featured in the ten highest rating stations as in the previous year, with *Newstalk ZB* maintaining its position as the country's most popular radio station. Although some other stations changed their ranking position within this group, audience totals and the percentage of station share are broadly consistent with previous years. This emphasises the even distribution of audience attention among these different stations (see Table 9).

[1] In 2023, ratings surveys were scheduled to take place on three occasions, unlike the four surveys presented in previous years. The totals compared above represent the second survey for 2023 (August) and the third survey for 2022 (September). Each survey was the most recent available at the time of reporting.

Table 9: Total NZ Commercial Radio – Survey Report 2 2023 (August

Rank	Station	Audience share %	Weekly reach (000s)
1	Newstalk ZB (NZME)	14.5	677.6
2	Breeze (MW)	9.4	611.0
3	More FM (MW)	8.1	590.2
4	The Rock (MW)	7.8	478.7
5 =	Mai FM (MW)	6.0	458.7
5 =	The Sound (MW)	6.0	362.9
7	The Edge (MW)	5.9	573.8
8 =	ZM (NZME)	5.6	528.7
8 =	Magic (MW)	5.6	280.2
10	Coast (NZME)	5.5	312.9

Online and podcast audiences

Where reported, online and podcast audiences have also sustained their growth trend from the previous year. RNZ reported modest growth for its online and podcast audiences: as of July 2023, website traffic was up 7.5% on the previous year and streaming audiences and podcast downloads had both increased by 3% (RNZ, 2023a). However, according to the most recent annual report, the total number of average monthly users (2,981,066) fell well below RNZ's target for the year (4 million). This shortfall was attributed to a correction from high engagement levels seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, "with news fatigue the major factor" (RNZ, 2023d, p.21).

In the commercial sector, NZME, and Newstalk ZB specifically, have continued to dominate some of the key podcast rankings in the New Zealand market (NZME, 2023j). As per the most recent results for the New Zealand Triton Podcast Ranker, the combined NZME / iHeartRadio / ARN network attracts over one million monthly listeners and almost five and a half million monthly downloads (Triton, 2023a). Crucially, these metrics do not simply reflect the popularity of international podcasts, for which NZME is the local sales representative. Podcasts that redistribute and/or repackage programmes from NZME radio stations held six of the top ten positions. *The Mike Hosking Breakfast* podcast was the top-ranked podcast in New Zealand for most of the year and as of September 2023 had increased its audience from the previous September by 40%, with 121,299 monthly listeners (Triton, 2023b).

In the context of the commercial radio industry, NZME's performance in the Triton rankings eclipsed MediaWorks' podcast network rova. As a network NZME had nearly five times as many monthly listeners (1,017,319 vs 211,107) and over ten times more monthly downloads (5,492,021 vs 517,714) (Triton, 2023a). Strong growth in both digital audio listening and revenue was also reported in NZME's interim results for 2023. Digital offerings now accounted for 7% of all radio revenue, exceeding a 5% target set in 2020 (NZME Limited, 2023h).

Advertising revenue

This year's combined industry report on advertising revenue (recording the previous year) suggests that radio advertising has recovered somewhat from the initial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For 2022, total radio revenue was $276 million, including $10 million attributed to digital forms of radio (Advertising Standards Authority [ASA], 2023). Although total revenue had increased by $12 million on the previous year, the radio industry's share of the total pool of advertising revenue in Aotearoa decreased further to 8.1%, from 8.3% in 2021 (ASA, 2022). As Peter Richardson, the General Manager of the Radio Broadcasters Association explains, indications that radio revenue is declining are likely a complex reflection of the "abnormal" circumstances of recent years and the significant advertising buy from the Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Richardson, 2023).

MediaWorks and Today FM

Perhaps the most significant development for radio in Aotearoa this year, with direct implications for the overall shape and structure of the sector, was the sudden closure of Today FM. As discussed in the Media Ownership Report, as a return to the news and talk radio formats for MediaWorks, Today FM did not find immediate ratings success. As media commentator Duncan Greive identifies, this was not necessarily cause for concern. He cited now-former MediaWorks CEO Cam Wallace who stressed that initial ratings results were irrelevant to the investment in a longer-term strategy (Greive, 2023e). As Donnell (2023) explains, the station "went off-air in spectacular fashion," and this was likely accelerated by the departures of CEO Cam Wallace and the head of news and talk, Dallas Gurney, immediately prior to the closure. Greive (2023e) further described the end of Today FM as "an act of stunning brutality from the new regime at MediaWorks," and questions the prioritisation of music formats that he sees as declining. Donnell (2023) adds a more nuanced perspective, reporting that redundancies at the start of the year (see RNZ, 2023c) had primarily affected the more profitable music brands. This had fostered some resentment towards Today FM within the organisation.

Subsequent to these events, MediaWorks made headlines late in 2023 over concerns with the organisation's financial records. In October, it was reported that MediaWorks had been "referred to the government" for failing to meet deadlines for filing financial results – an obligation (Quill, 2023). The subsequent release of those results showed that MediaWorks had "suffered a loss of $125.9 million in the year to December 31, 2022, compared to a $4.9m loss the year before" (Edmunds, 2023a), as well as a decline in assets. Amidst efforts to refinance the company, statements from MediaWorks have sought to quell speculation that the company will be sold (Stuff, 2023a). Regardless, these financial results paint a complex and uncertain picture for the current structures of the radio industry when presented alongside consistent and stable listening data and advertising revenue.

Radio New Zealand

The last year has been a mixed one for RNZ with the broadcaster gaining kudos for the vital role its AM network played during Cyclone Gabrielle in February only to be struck by controversy over perceived pro-Kremlin editing in its news reports in June. The planned merger with TVNZ was abandoned and some prominent presenters also left the broadcaster.

In March 2022, the then Broadcasting and Media Minster Kris Faafoi announced that TVNZ and RNZ would be merged into a single new media entity on 3 March 2023 (Venuto, 2022). Less than a year later, the then Prime Minister Chris Hipkins announced that the merger plan had been scrapped and that the Government was concerned with 'bread and butter' issues as it faced an election in October 2023 (Trafford, 2023). In the wake of this decision, the Government announced a $25.7 million budget increase for RNZ for the next four years (Peacock, 2023a). The merger had been a controversial idea, but some saw its demise as a missed opportunity to engage wider and more varied audiences across multiplatform services (Thompson, 2023).

Cyclone Gabrielle struck New Zealand in February 2023 causing much destruction, displacing thousands and leaving 11 people dead. Damage to power stations shut down digital communication networks and battery-powered AM radios became necessities for information. RNZ's AM network became an important source of information during this crisis (Pennington, 2023).

In June of 2023, an RNZ digital journalist was found to have been editing news copy to give them a pro-Russian bias (Morris & Cai, 2023). RNZ instigated an internal investigation and found that 49 stories had been altered. The editorial audit was placed prominently on the RNZ news website to demonstrate the transparency of the process and to keep the audience informed of its progress. The investigating panel made 22 recommendations among which were increased training, stronger editorial standards and combining digital and radio news teams (TVNZ, 2023b). RNZ CEO Paul Thompson described the review as "a really robust testing process" and the panel's recommendations as "really constructive" (Currie, 2023c). The episode highlighted the importance of accuracy and neutrality in building trust in a public broadcaster such as RNZ.

This trust also depends on a broadcaster's presenters, and this year saw several important changes in RNZ's roster of hosts and reporters. Midday Report presenter Māni Dunlop left RNZ in March after being passed over in favour of Ingrid Hipkiss as co-host on RNZ's news flagship Morning Report. The first Māori to present a weekday show at RNZ, Dunlop stressed the importance of representation in media institutions (Harris, 2023). Author and broadcaster Karyn Hay resigned from her role as producer and host on RNZ Nights after an independent employment investigation (Currie, 2023i). And after 21 years of hosting RNZ's Saturday Morning¸ Kim Hill announced her retirement with her final show happening on 25 November this year. Hill's departure might be read as symbolising the end of one era for RNZ and the start of another which may better reflect more Aotearoa's cultural diversity.

5. Print and Online

Greg Treadwell

In 2023, print and online media in Aotearoa New Zealand emerged from the existentially threatening disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included an almost total collapse of advertising markets in 2020/2021. With a restarting economy and some help from the Government's COVID relief packages (Pullar-Strecker, 2020a; Beehive, 2020), besieged media organisations got back to their knees only to face an economic environment beset by high inflation and stalled growth. Faced with the ongoing falls in newspaper readership and fast-changing relationships with digital technology platforms (Myllylahti, 2023), the media sector has taken a precautionary stance during an "an extremely challenging operating environment" (NZME Limited, 2023f). This landscape has included record-low business confidence because of supply chain chaos, labour shortages and climbing interest rates, as well as relatively high and stubborn inflationary pressures. Despite such challenges, innovative business models continue to be explored to support democratic journalism, including a proposal to establish a network of up to 17 digital new services across the regions of Aotearoa New Zealand funded through a mixed-revenue model (Mediawatch, 2023). Meanwhile, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in news has become high on the industry agenda.

The duopolistic contest between NZME Ltd and Stuff Ltd continued to dominate the market in print and online national news in New Zealand in 2023. Both have undergone multiple brand and ownership changes over recent decades. This year, Stuff introduced a paywall. Instead of putting up a paywall around premium content (produced by investigations, senior and national correspondents, high-profile contributors), as NZME had done, Stuff put up a $5 paywall around locally and regionally gathered news. Such content came from three substantial newsrooms: *The Press* (Christchurch), *The Post* (Wellington) and *The Waikato Times* (Hamilton) (Murphy, 2023d).

By the end of 2023, increasing numbers of news organisations had introduced some sort of paywall into their business model, albeit in different ways. NZME's paywall monetises premium content, while Stuff's targets metropolitan audiences, both now charge for online news content.

Independent news media continue to have a growing influence in the New Zealand media domain, a trend identified in JMAD's 2020 *New Zealand Media Ownership Report*. Stuff and its associated titles, which include metropolitan papers in Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, represents the lion's share of that. However, smaller players are now also well established in the media ecosystem through a variety of business models, from free access and sponsorship to premium subscriptions and hard paywalls. So-called anti-establishment media outlets, often thematically connected to post-pandemic libertarian politics and opposed to mainstream media discourse, have consolidated their position online. Ownership and/or funding of these sites, which often claim to be legitimate sources of journalism, is often unclear.

The Labour government's 2021 injection of $55 million over three years to support a range of New Zealand news organisations through its Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) came to an end in June 2023 (Manatū Taonga, n.d.). Prominent among these initiatives was the boost to court reporting through the NZ On Air-funded Open Justice initiative and Te Rito, a collaboration between NZME, Newshub, Māori Television and the Pacific Media Network to boost the diversity of New Zealand newsrooms—and so the diversity of the news itself (Mediawatch, 2021).

In 2022, post-pandemic shifts in the labour market and the return of international travel saw newsrooms, like many other New Zealand workplaces (Morrison, 2022), struggle to find staff to fill empty positions. Rising unemployment in 2023 may reflect some changes in that situation. Figures released by Statistics New Zealand in November show unemployment has increased to 3.9% up from 3.6% in the previous quarter (RNZ, 2023b).

New Zealand magazines, meanwhile, continue to face a challenging environment as they rebuild readership after the walkout of German media giant Bauer Media Ltd in 2020. Many of these magazines were bought by an Australian private equity firm and others surviving after returning to independent ownership. Some of these have been sold again and others closed altogether.

The *New Zealand Herald*

This year NZME's flagship Auckland newspaper, the *New Zealand Herald*, celebrated its 160th birthday (Venuto, 2023). The *Herald* was founded by William Chisholm Wilson in 1863 (Roughan, 2013) and for much of the 20th century was owned by prominent

Auckland business families. From 1996, it was owned by APN News and Media Ltd until NZME was formed in 2014. NZME, which also owns the *Weekend Herald*, *Herald on Sunday* and flagship radio station Newstalk ZB, is a publicly owned company listed on both the New Zealand (NZX) and Australian (ASX) stock markets. In its regional print stable, its main titles are *The Northern Advocate*, *The Rotorua Daily Post*, *The Bay of Plenty Times*, *The Whanganui Chronicle* and *The Northland Age*.

In 2022, NZME Ltd saw its EBITDA grow by 4% to $64.7 million. A fall in statutory net profit (SNP) from $34.4 million in 2021 to $22.7 million in 2022 was because of high profit levels in 2021. These had been boosted by the $15.4 million sale of GrabOne, says the company (NZME Limited, 2023g). Operating earnings were 12.1 cents per share, 13% higher than 2021. However, in tougher economic circumstances, its first-half results in 2023 included EBITDA of $21.3 million, down 24.2% on the corresponding period last year. The company's SNP was $2 million. Its half year operating revenue was $166 million, down 6% against the first half of 2022, results which the company puts down to a difficult economic environment (NZME, 2023f). Advertising revenue was $116.4 million, 7% down on the first half of 2022, thanks to lower demand from the government, retail and real estate sectors (NZME, 2023f)

Michael Boggs, NZME chief executive, attributed the first-half results to New Zealand's first economic recession in a decade (NZME, 2023f), but said second-half indicators were encouraging, with business confidence recovering and interest rates peaking. Among first-half highlights for the company was an increase in overall subscriptions from 209,000 at the end of 2022 to 218,000, with 123,000 of these digital-only subscriptions.

Figures from Nielsen Research show newspaper readership continuing to fall. The average *New Zealand Herald* readership per issue in the year to June 2023 (Nielsen Research, 2023) was 545,000, down from 598,000 in the previous year. Average issue readership of NZME's *Weekend Herald* fell from 346,000 to 291,000 over the same period, a drop of 15.9%.

Recent acquisitions by NZME have included business news site BusinessDesk, online job advertising platform YUDU, property portal OneRoof and motoring website Driven. It sold its GrabOne business to Global Marketplace New Zealand Limited for $17.5 million in 2021. Early in 2022, NZME completed its $5 million purchase of

BusinessDesk, an independent site operating since 2008 when it began as a "newswire" (Smellie, 2021). The sale came after sustained growth at BusinessDesk (P. Smellie, personal communication, October 2, 2020). Managing editor Patrick Smellie told readers the publication would remain separate but would have "the power of NZX-listed NZME" behind it (2021).

In marking the *Herald's* 160th anniversary of its founding, Managing Editor Murray Kirkness said that while an anniversary was always an opportunity to reflect on the past, his focus was largely on what comes next for the paper (Venuto, 2023). The future of the paper would be defined by the work of its journalists as they embraced new ways of doing journalism. How much time was left for print journalism, asked NZME podcast host Damen Venuto (2023)? And how much of an impact would AI have on the flow of news?

Stuff

Stuff Ltd, which owns flagship news and current affairs site stuff.co.nz, as well as numerous metropolitan, regional and community newspapers, is the largest media organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Its corporate ownership heritage includes Independent Newspapers Ltd (owned in large part by News Corporation Australia Ltd), Fairfax Media Ltd and finally Nine Entertainment Ltd, which sold all of its holdings in 2021 for $1 to former journalist and chief executive Sinead Boucher. The sale included the nation's biggest news website, nine metropolitan and regional newspapers and more than 30 community titles. Stuff's owners Nine Entertainment Ltd had been keen to divest New Zealand media assets after a potential sale to NZME had faltered. Boucher's purchase is widely considered to have "saved New Zealand's largest newspaper publisher and online news site from uncertainty at best, closure at worst" (Hope, 2020).

At the time Boucher intimated that significant staff ownership was on the cards. In 2022, a trust, Puna Rawa, was established, with 10% of the value of the company transferred to it as virtual-preference shares owned by staff. This was preferred as a mechanism because it established ownership without imposing tax debt on value not yet realised (S. Boucher, personal communication, November 6, 2022). While Boucher's company, Kenepuru Holdings Ltd, remains the sole shareholder of Stuff, staff receive a share of any dividends paid out, and 10% of the proceeds if Stuff is later sold or listed on the NZX. A small number of staff, including the company's head of finance, act as trustees but do not have voting rights. Further direct share ownership by staff in the future was tipped in 2021 but has not eventuated (Pullar-Strecker, 2021).

Stuff's metropolitan and regional newspapers are: The Post, (formerly *The Dominion Post*), *The Press*, the *Waikato Times*, the *Taranaki Daily News*, the *Manawatū Standard*, the *Nelson Mail*, the *Marlborough Express*, *The Timaru Herald*, and *The Southland Times*. It still also owns 34 community newspapers across the country, having closed many others in 2018. Stuff also owns community website Neighbourly.

In 2023, Stuff Ltd underwent a major management restructure, which saw Boucher move to become publisher and executive chair, and Laura Maxwell, a former NZME chief digital officer, appointed as chief executive. Boucher said in a statement to the *New Zealand Herald* (Currie, 2023j) that she was looking forward to focusing strategically on the business as it prepared for the next big disruption of the digital era—the advent of new generative AI technologies. "We've done a huge amount of valuable transformation over the past three years…building our technology and capability to ensure we are fit to meet the challenges of the future in a time of profound disruption." Meanwhile, the company also made appointments reflecting its creation of three distinct companies (Stuff, 2023b). It appointed Nadia Tolich as managing director of Stuff Digital, Joanna Norris as managing director of Stuff Masthead Publishing and Matt Headland as managing director of Stuff Brand Connections.

In other major news, Stuff tweaked its business model significantly in 2023, introducing digital mastheads, complete with paywalls, for its three major metropolitan titles, *The Post*, *The Waikato Times* and *The Press*. The move came some four years after its main competitor, nzherald.co.nz, introduced its premium content paywall. In a contrasting strategy, Stuff has offered subscriber bases according to local interest, rather than premium content. Norris told The Spinoff that Stuff had always known it would "want to at some point move to have this option available to subscribers" (Greive, 2023b).

Last year, after a year of no job cuts in 2021, Stuff Ltd restructured its regional newsrooms and laid off their news directors. Breaking news from the regions is now covered by a "regional team" (Donnell, 2022) comprising a group regional editor, four news directors and nine breaking news reporters. In 2023, it reportedly faced strong internal opposition to a proposal to cut 28 journalists as part of its transformation to three distinct businesses (Currie, 2023f).

No longer connected to the stock market, Stuff is not statutorily required to make its financial outcomes public (in the way NZME is required to do). However, a year after the sale, Boucher told Stuff journalist Tom Pullar-Strecker the company would record a profit in the first half of the year, at least before abnormals were included and despite the investments necessary to complete the final separation from Nine Entertainment (Pullar-Strecker, 2021).

Independent newspapers

Beyond the central presence of Stuff Ltd, local ownership within the independent news-organisation sector continues to be resilient in Aotearoa New Zealand. Allied Press Ltd, owners of the *Otago Daily Times* and a stable of community and regional papers, has long been a stalwart of local ownership. *The NBR*, no longer published in print, has been independent and New Zealand-owned for more than 50 years. A range of independent newspapers survives in both the North and South islands. Meanwhile, the now-established small-independent sector, with key players Newsroom, The Spinoff, Crux, Scoop and interest.co.nz, continues to have authority in the market. Independent community newspapers, where they survive, demonstrate the resilience of local independent ownership and authentic community engagement.

Allied Press Ltd publishes the *Otago Daily Times* and a stable of smaller regional and community newspapers, including the *Ashburton Guardian*, *Mountain Scene*, *Central Rural Life*, *Southern Rural Life*, the *Courier* (Timaru), the *Ensign* (Gore), *Hokitika Guardian* and the *Oamaru Mail*. In 2022, it added the *Wanaka Sun* to its stable. Allied Press is owned by Fraser Smith Holdings, a holding company owned by Sir Julian Smith and his family. Its chief executive is Grant McKenzie. The family-owned *Westport News* has been a voice for West Coasters since the 1870s and is owned by Kevin Scanlon and Lee Scanlon.

In the North Island, the *Whakatane Beacon*, the *Waitomo News* and the *Ōpōtiki News* are owned by the Beacon Printing and Publishing Co Ltd, which was first incorporated in 1939. The *Bay of Plenty Beacon* (later renamed the *Whakatane Beacon*) was founded by the late Leicester Spring and is still largely owned by the Spring family. Leicester’s son, John Spring, is the current 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 Poverty Bay, 51% of the *Gisborne Herald* is majority-owned by members of the Muir family, associated with the paper over five generations. Michael Muir is its longstanding managing director and his son, Jeremy Muir, is the current editor. NZME Ltd has long been a significant shareholder, with 49% of the company owned through a trust structure listed under Essex Castle Ltd. In November 2022, the trust holding was wound up and now NZME holds the legal and beneficial interest in the shares directly (A. Whitney, personal communication, November 14, 2022). The newspaper remains under the directorship of the family, which retains a controlling share. Today, the Gisborne Herald Company Ltd has a 22.58% stake in the *Wairoa Star* (NZME Ltd also has a stake of 40.41%).

Newspaper readership

Readership of New Zealand newspapers continues to decline, according to Neilsen Research (2023). The *New Zealand Herald* again leads the readership stakes, with a cross-platform audience of 1.7 million in the 12 months to June 2023, down from 1.8 million last year but almost five times as many as the second placed *The Post* (formerly *The Dominion Post*). It has a readership of 363,000, down from 379,000.

Two leading titles to grow their total cross-platform audiences in the year to June 2023 were the *Waikato Times*, up 16,000 (+8.6%) to 203,000, and the *Taranaki Daily News*, up 6,000 (+5.1%) to 124,000. Other newspapers to increase their total cross-platform audiences during 2022-2023 included the *Manawatu Standard*, up 22,000 (+23.4%) to 116,000, the *Rotorua Daily Post*, up 8,000 (+8.2%) to 105,000, the *Southland Times*, up 27,000 (+35.1%) to 104,000, the *Sunday News*, up 17,000 (+22.7%) to 92,000, the *Nelson Mail*, up 7,000 (+9.3%) to 82,000, the *Gisborne Herald*, up 1,000 (+1.4%) to 71,000 and the *Ashburton Guardian*, up 1,000 (+2.5%) to 41,000 (Roy Morgan Research, 2023).

More than 65% of New Zealanders (aged 14+) read or access newspapers in an average 7-day period via print or online (website or app). Among the 10-best read publications, there were cross-platform readership falls to June 2023 at *The Post* (-4.2%), *The Press* (-0.4%), the *Sunday Star-Times* (-1.6%), *Hawkes Bay Today* (-3.9%), *The Northern Advocate* (-4.5%) and the *Bay of Plenty Times* (-5.2%). *The*

Taranaki Daily News grew its cross-platform audience by 5.1%. (-10.6%). Last year, 5 of the 10 best-read New Zealand newspapers grew their cross-platform audiences (Roy Morgan Research, 2022). They were *The Northern Advocate*, up 33,000 (26.8%) to 154,000; *Hawke's Bay Today*, up 27,000 (17.5%) to 178,000; the *Otago Daily Times*, up 2,000 (0.7%) to 287,000; the *Waikato Times*, up 3,000 (1.8%) to 187,000; and *Bay of Plenty Times*, up 8,000 (5.7%) to 154,000 (Table 10).

Table 10: Newspaper Readership in New Zealand, 12 Months to June 2023

	Print		Digital (web or app)		Total cross-platform audience (print, web or app)		
	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	% change in TCPA
New Zealand Herald	510	477	1,560	1,535	1,800	1,747	-2.9%
Dominion Post	174	138	264	275	379	364	-4.2%
Otago Daily Times	94	84	229	214	287	264	-8.0%
The Press	129	130	175	173	251	250	-0.4%
Waikato Times	80	77	131	139	187	203	8.6%
Sunday Star-Times	155	138	45	61	190	187	-1.6%
Hawke's Bay Today	77	65	123	122	178	171	-3.9%
Northern Advocate	62	53	110	113	154	147	-4.5%
Bay of Plenty Times	63	56	111	100	154	146	-5.2%
Taranaki Daily News	43	37	95	104	118	124	5.1%

Source: Roy Morgan. 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 7 days. Online is net readership online in an average 7 days.

Independent news websites

Online alternatives to the mainstream duopoly of Stuff and the *New Zealand Herald* continue to survive in fast-moving media markets. They have developed respected newsrooms which have influence across the political, business, economics, cultural, sporting and media fields they cover. They regularly take-home prizes in the national journalism awards (e.g., Voyager, 2022).

Newsroom

Newsroom has now been publishing as an independent, quality news website for six years. It started with 16 full-and-part-time staff and by early 2022 had 24 and was reaching around 700,000 unique readers a month (Jennings, 2022). The site (newsroom.co.nz) was launched in 2017 by journalists Mark Jennings, formerly of TV3, and Tim Murphy, formerly editor-in-chief at the *New Zealand Herald*. Its aim is to provide in-depth news and analysis for a thinking audience. Newsroom boasts experienced and respected staff and has broken stories that have had major impacts on Aotearoa New Zealand society. The site is supported financially by partners in the corporate and tertiary education sectors, as well as by private donations and a premium subscription service. Corporate sponsorship, under which Newsroom provides video for corporate clients, is the business' biggest income stream (Newsroom, 2017). This helps to fund its public interest journalism. The company's directors are Jennings and Murphy, along with ecostore managing director Pablo Kraus. Newsroom New Zealand Ltd is mostly owned by Jennings and Murphy, with minor shareholders including award-winning journalists Bernard Hickey and Melanie Reid.

The Spinoff

An independent and digital-only media outlet, The Spinoff was founded by journalist Duncan Greive in 2014. It considers itself as "a magazine for the digital age, not always racing to break stories, but striving to analyse what they mean" (Myllylahti & Baker, 2019). In November 2023, it reported its website was being viewed an average of 2.3 million times a month and was visited by more than 800,000 people each month (A. Easby, personal communication, November 25, 2023). On social media The Spinoff reached more than 1.2 million people each month via Facebook (142,000 followers), Instagram (44,500), X (64,000 followers) and YouTube (37,500 subscribers). More than 12,000 people use The Spinoff iOS and Android apps. It has 96,000 subscribers to its family of newsletters, more than 50% of which are opened. In March 2023, its suite of podcasts generated 120,000 downloads, while 608,094 minutes of video content was watched on its YouTube channel.

The largest shareholders in the company are Greive and his wife, Nicola Greive, who each hold 46.5% of the company's shares. Almost all the rest are held by Toby Manhire (former editor) and Scott Stevenson (sportswriter). The site's operations are funded by partnerships, including with Lightbox (Spark), Kiwibank, Unity Books and Callaghan Innovation. It also publishes sponsored content. In the past, the site has also gained funding from NZ On Air and Creative New Zealand. Readers can pay voluntary donations to support its journalism via the PressPatron platform. In June 2019, The Spinoff launched a paid membership scheme and by August 2020 had 10,000 members (D. Greive, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

In June 2022, The Spinoff announced a new content sharing arrangement with Stuff. Duncan Greive, publisher and chief executive, praised Stuff's approach since coming into private ownership and said as the industry's attempts to negotiate with destructive tech giants made little headway, working together was the only way to "navigate the most perilous stretch in media history" (Greive, 2022a). He said the two companies shared a vision of a "collaborative media ecosystem" fundamental to surviving the loss of half of every advertising dollar to big tech companies.

interest.co.nz

interest.co.nz has been publishing business and economic news since 1999. It is owned by JDJL Ltd, whose sole shareholder is publisher David Chaston. The newsroom is led by managing editor Gareth Vaughan, news editor David Hargreaves and senior journalist Greg Ninness. The site's business and investment journalism is funded through advertising and reader contributions via PressPatron (interest.co.nz, n.d.).

National Business Review

Longstanding business publication, the NBR, stopped its publication of opinion columns in September 2023, while keeping its analysis-driven journalism. The opinion columns dropped included Duncan Garner's *Duncan Disorderly*, Simon Bridges' *Unabridged*, Brigitte Morten's *On the Record*, Holly Bennett and Barry Soutar's *Te Ōhanga Māori*, Martin Devlin's *Playing the Ball*, Dan Laufer's *Risky Business* and an in-house column by Dita De Boni and Maria Slade titled *The Flip Side*. It said at the time it wanted to focus more on news and analysis. Co-editor Calida Stuart-Menteith said division and sometimes vitriol among readers responding to columns was also part of the reason. Analysis that remains includes Tim Hunter's *Hunter's Corner*, Brent Edwards' *Edwards on Politics* and *Beehive Banter*, *Margin Call by investment analysts*, Brent Sheather's *On the Money*, Hillmarè Schulze and Christoph Schumacher's *Economy Matters,* and the editorial *Last Call*.

In 2023, the NBR also hired its first Australian-based journalist, who works for the site out of Sydney. In another innovation, it plans to offer all university students free premium access to its site in 2024. In November 2023, the NBR had a team of 10 journalists, 2 co-editors and 4 production staff (C. Stuart-Menteith, personal communication, November 15, 2023).

After five decades of newspaper publishing, the company canned its print product in March 2020 and has since relied solely on its long-successful website. In 2022, Calida Stuart-Menteath and Hamish McNicol took over co-editorship from Tim Hunter and Fiona Rotherham. McNicol rejoined NBR in 2020 after three years in London. Stuart-Menteath, one of NBR's longest-serving editorial staff, was named New Zealand Journalist of the Year at the Citi Journalism Awards in 2021, while the year before she had taken out the Voyager award for Business Journalist of the Year.

The NBR is owned in total by its Fiji-based directors Todd Scott and Jackie Scott. Scott's Fourth Estate Holdings (2012) Ltd completed its long acquisition of the NBR from previous owner Barry Colman in 2020, 50 years after its inception as a business newspaper (National Business Review, n.d.). Scott, taken on by Colman in 2008 to monetise its online presence in the face of plummeting newspaper revenues, became its chief executive and was part of the ground-breaking introduction of the NBR's paywall in 2009 (National Business Review, n.d.).

Scoop

Scoop has been an independent, digital, free news website since its inception 22 years ago. It is owned by Scoop Publishing Limited, whose directors are journalists Alastair Thompson and Ian Llewellyn. Scoop Publishing is a social enterprise wholly owned by the Scoop Foundation for Public Interest Journalism, a not-for-profit charitable trust established in 2015. Scoop is funded by subscriptions, commercial-use licensing revenue and member donations. ScoopPro features a paid e-mail service and other media intelligence tools to aid funding of Scoop's newsroom operations. Scoop's editorial team includes co-editors Joseph Cederwall and Ian Llewellyn, Gordon Campbell (political editor), Lindsay Shelton (Wellington editor) and Howard Davis (arts editor).

Asia Pacific Report

The Asia Pacific Report news website (asiapacificreport.nz) was launched by AUT's Pacific Media Centre in 2016 in a joint venture with journalist Selwyn Manning's company, Multimedia Investments Ltd. The site was edited by Professor David Robie and included work produced by postgraduate journalism students. Since the departure of Robie from Auckland University of Technology in 2020, the not-for-profit site has been owned by Robie's Asia Pacific Network and Manning's Multimedia Investments Ltd. Robie remains editor and the site attracts work from journalists, student journalists and academics from around the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to provide an independent Asia-Pacific voice telling stories that address justice issues for the marginalised and providing an educational media resource and Asia-Pacific journalism experience for students and graduates (Asia Pacific Report, n.d.).

"Anti-establishment" media

While left-oppositional media curators like Martyn Bradbury's The Daily Blog have been around for a decade now, the post-pandemic period has seen the growth of alternative "anti-establishment" (Greive, 2023f) media in Aotearoa New Zealand. Among its leading online identities is The Platform, a web radio service focused on free speech and the defeat of what it calls left-wing "woke culture". Its lead presenter is former RNZ journalist and Magic Talk presenter Sean Plunkett. Plunkett had left Magic Talk in controversial circumstances (Greive, 2022b) and 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 as "all too cosy" (Greive, 2022b). Former sports presenter Martin Devlin, former ACT Party leader Rodney Hide and former Whanganui mayor Michael Laws were among those who joined Plunkett on The Platform.

Another web radio service, Reality Check Radio, emerged from the anti-vaccination and anti-COVID-19-mandate movements. Founded by the group Voices for Freedom, which is associated with conspiracy theories (Stuff Circuit, 2022) and was banned from Facebook in July 2021 for publishing disinformation (Fisher, 2021). It professes to "challenge the medical dictatorship thrust upon New Zealanders under the guise of a pandemic response" (Voices for Freedom, n.d.), and features former broadcaster Peter Williams, anti-vaccine influencer Chantelle Baker and former newsreader Paul Brennan. Also anti-establishment and anti-mainstream media is nznewsessentials.com, a secretive right-wing site which does not include author names in its commentary articles. It says it has an unnamed editorial board with a “wide range of domestic and international experience” (nznewsessentials, 2022). Unhappy with the state of the New Zealand media, it is “in the game to shake things up”.

Meanwhile, the centre-right YouTube channel The Common Room, was co-founded by former advertising creative Mike Ballantyne and strategic creative Louise Bridges in August 2022.

Regional and community news

The digital age and resultant disruptions of media business models have seen widespread closures of New Zealand’s community newspapers in recent years, including former Stuff owner Fairfax’s axing of 28 established titles in 2018. As of November 2023, Stuff’s surviving 34 community papers are: the *Central Leader*, the *Cambridge Edition*, the *East & Bays Courier*, the *Eastern Courier*, the *Feilding-Rangitikei Herald*, the *Franklin County News*, the *Hauraki Herald*, the *Hamilton Press*, the *Horowhenua Mail*, the *Kapi-Mana News*, the *Kapiti Observer*, the *Manukau Courier,* the *Marlborough Midweek*, the *Matamata Chronicle*, the *North Harbour News*, the *North Shore Times*, the *North Taranaki Midweek*, the *Northern News*, the *Northern Outlook*, the *Nor-west News*, the *Rodney Times*, the *Piako Post*, the *Papakura Courier*, the *Saturday Express*, the *South Waikato News*, the *Taranaki Star*, the *Taupo Times*, *The Bay Chronicle*, *The Hutt News*, *The Nelson Leader*, *The Tasman Leader*, the *Upper Hutt Leader*, the *Western Leader* and the *Whangarei Leader*.

NZME Ltd, meanwhile, has a collection of community titles that include the *Horowhenua Chronicle*, the *Te Puke Times*, the *Hastings Leader*, the *Hauraki-Coromandel Post*, the *Taupo and Turangi Herald*, the *Rotorua Weekender*, the *Central Hawkes Bay Mail*, the *Te Awamutu Courier*, the *Manawatū Guardian*, the *Bush Telegraph Tararua*, the *Katikati Advertiser*, *Kāpiti News*, *Whanganui Midweek*, the *Napier Courier* and the *Stratford Press*.

Other community newspapers across the country include those in the Allied Press and Beacon Printing and Publishing stables (see Independent newspapers) and SunMedia’s publications in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato, *The Weekend Sun*, *Coast &*

Country News. SunMedia, which also publishes the well-read community news site SunLive (sunlive.co.nz), was launched in 2000 by Claire and Brian Rogers. Brian Rogers died after a battle with cancer in 2022 and has been remembered as a media pioneer and stalwart of independent community news (SunLive, 2022). The company's shares as of November 2023 are owned by Claire Rogers, David Holmes and Lindsay Grace. Claire Rogers is the sole director. Meanwhile, the pandemic saw the end of Southland paper *Advocate South*, but Advocate Communications Ltd's Southland App now publishes news and current events for the region to mobile phones. Advocate Communications Ltd is owned equally by David Pickett and Kirsty Pickett.

Crux, a successful not-for-profit news site covering Queenstown, Wanaka and Cromwell in the Southern Lakes region since 2018, has been now proposed as a model for a network of up to 17 regional news services covering under-reported regional communities across the country. Crux's founder and managing editor is experienced New Zealand journalist and television producer Peter Newport. Crux Publishing Ltd is owned by the not-for-profit Crux Media Trust. The site reached 100,000 page views in two years and had approximately "150,000 engagements on Facebook a month" (P. Newport, personal communication, October 12, 2020). In April 2023, Newport and RugbyPass founder Tim Martin announced they were looking for editors, reporters and financial backers to establish a provincial news network. Newport told RNZ (Mediawatch, 2023) that the business model would include well-paid roles for senior journalists who would effectively be editors of their own publications. Martin told RNZ (Mediawatch, 2023) that the network would need to rely on five revenue streams: a mix of local and national advertising; audience contributions; payments from social media giants Google and Meta; some form of government support; and the sale of regional content to national news publishers. It would not set out to compete with major players NZME Ltd or Stuff Ltd and would harness the economic energy of the provinces, where most of the country's exporters were to be found. In early November 2023, Newport said detailed discussions (P. Newport, personal communication, November 5, 2023) were underway with private investors, the Government and Opposition and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, as well as other potential stakeholders. While the media environment was challenging, it was clear there was both a need and an appetite for a regional news network. Progress had been "complex but promising" (P. Newport, personal communication, November 5, 2023), there had been very strong interest from journalists, and a launch date would be announced in late 2023 or early 2024. He said Crux had always been intended as a template for a much larger business model and had seen success in audience growth, market share, editorial output, holding local government to account and community engagement. It had proved using technology and working smart worked well and represented the “lean future” of journalism. “Many existing news platforms have been slow to cut their overheads to match much reduced revenue,” he said (P. Newport, personal communication, November 5, 2023).

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 the approximately 80 other members of the New Zealand Community Newspapers Association (NZCNA). *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. In east Auckland, Times Media Ltd publishes the *Howick and Pakuranga Times* and the *Botany and Ormiston Times*. Both newspapers and Times Online are edited by Nick Krause. Times Media Ltd is equally owned by long-time community news publishers Brian and Reay Neben, stalwarts of the NZCNA.

Magazines

According to Roy Morgan Research (2023) almost 1.7 million New Zealanders (aged 14+) read magazines, whether in print or online (web or app) in 2023. As mentioned, many of New Zealand’s well-known magazine titles were forced to re-evaluate their situation by the sudden exit of German company Bauer Media Ltd in 2020 from its central place in the Australasian magazine market. Bauer had only just bought the titles of Pacific Magazines for $40 million, including iconic New Zealand titles. They appeared to be doomed but made a comeback in June 2020 when Sydney-based private equity firm Mercury Capital Ltd, run by former Aucklander Clark Perkins, bought Bauer's Australasian operations for a reported $50 million. *Woman’s Day*, *NZ Woman’s Weekly*, *NZ Listener*, *Kia Ora* and *Your Home & Garden* would all return to publishing and remain on New Zealand’s supermarket shelves in 2023.

North & South was on-sold to independent publishers Konstantin Richter and Verena Friederike Hasel, who would sell it again in 2023 to School Road Publishing, while *Metro* had gone to Simon Chesterman in 2020. Another New Zealand-owned company, Parkside Media, secured the sale of *Home* and *Fashion Quarterly* from Bauer, adding them to its stable of specialist titles: *The Shed*, *D-Photo*, *Auto Channel*, *New Zealand Classic Car*, *NZV8* and *NZ Performance Car*. *Fashion Quarterly*, founded in 1980, is edited by Sarah Murray. Parkside Media is owned by CB Trustees 2012 Ltd, EMS & SEES Trustees Ltd, Gregory Hugh Vincent and Michael Anthony White.

Former *NZ Woman's Weekly* deputy editor Kelly Bertrand founded an online magazine, *Capsule* (capsulenz.com), in 2020. Now, in 2023, the site is co-edited by Bertrand, Emma Clifton and Alice O'Connell. Simon Farrell-Green, former editor of *Home*, set up the architecture magazine, *Here*. Four new lifestyle titles—*Woman*, *Haven*, *Scout* and *Thrive*—were launched by School Road Publishing in November 2020. Of these, only *Woman* survives in late 2023. In May 2023, School Road Publishing bought longstanding current affairs magazine *North & South*, its second sale since the Bauer departure. School Road Publishing is owned by Waitapu Trustee Ltd, which is 100% owned by advertising entrepreneur Greg Partington.

Elsewhere, small and medium-sized publishers continue to hold on in a disrupted market. *New Zealand Geographic*, now under the editorship of Catherine Woulfe, continues its 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. 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 males plus bisexual, lesbian and transgender persons (Your Ex, n.d.). Started as an A4 photocopied pamphlet in 1992 (Your Ex, n.d.), *Express* now publishes via a website, a national, monthly magazine (printed and online) and through a social media presence. *Express* is published by TMO Publications Ltd, which is owned equally between *Express'* editor Oliver Hall and its business manager, Matthew Fistonich.

Magazine readership in Aotearoa New Zealand, in general, fell in the year to June 2023 (Roy Morgan, 2022). *NZ House & Garden* readership fell by more than 16%, while both *TV Guide* and *Dish* experienced falls of more than 11% (see Table 11).

AA Directions was again easily the most widely read magazine with a cross-platform audience of 418,000—more than 150,000 ahead of its nearest rivals for the 12 months to June 2023. The *New Zealand Listener* increased its cross-platform audience by 9000 to 245,000, while *NZ Woman's Day* grew its readership by 11,000 to 196,000.

Table 11: Magazine Readership in New Zealand, 12 Months to June 2023

	Print		Digital (web or app)		Total cross-platform audience (print, web or app)		
	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	June 2022 (000's)	June 2023 (000's)	% change in TCPA
AA Directions	345	338	169	161	436	418	-4.1%
NZ Listener	198	207	71	68	236	245	3.8%
NZ Woman's Day/ Now to Love	120	145	91	72	185	196	5.9%
Australian Women's Weekly (NZ Edition)	132	127	71	55	185	170	-8.1%
TV Guide	152	152	62	38	191	169	-11.5%
Dish	91	83	113	111	179	158	-11.7%
Habitat	101	108	73	55	157	147	-6.4%
NZ Woman's Weekly / Now to Love	101	76	73	91	155	154	-0.7%
Fish & Game NZ	35	71	81	80	112	136	-6.4%
NZ House & Garden	86	82	90	66	162	136	-16.0%

Source: Roy MorganCross-platform audience is the number of New Zealanders who have read or accessed individual magazine content via print or online. Print is average issue readership. Digital is average website visitation and app usage (if available) in last 7 days for weekly titles (*New Idea*, *New Zealand Listener*, *NZ Woman's Day*, *NZ Woman's Weekly*, *Property Press*, *That's Life*, *Time*, *TV Guide*) and last 4 weeks for all other non-weekly titles.

6. Māori-Language and Māori-Interest News

Atakohu Middleton

Introduction

Māori-language and Māori-interest news and current affairs are funded by the government under its statutory Tiriti o Waitangi obligations to Māori language and culture. Funding for public Māori-language programming overall is funnelled primarily through Māori broadcasting funding agency Te Māngai Pāho (TMP). English-language programming is funded primarily through general broadcasting agency Irirangi Te Motu NZ On Air, which has a mandate to support the production of quality Māori content made for a general audience, but the two agencies work together on funding some Māori content. For more detail on the makeup of the sector, see Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership reports 2020-2022.

After three years heavily disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2023 represented a return to (relatively) normal transmission for Māori-language and Māori-interest media. However, it was also the year that the proposed merger of RNZ and Television New Zealand (TVNZ), which would have had implications for Māori news media, was scrapped by a Labour government forced into expediency in an election year. The year 2023 also saw the end of the three-year PIJF, an important but temporary funding source to support the national and Māori news sector through the lean COVID-19 years. In October 2023, as the cost of living dominated the headlines and several regions continued to mop up after unprecedented weather events, a new government came to power; state-funded media, both Māori and national, expect that there will be little or no new funding available in the next few years.

Māori-Language and Māori-interest news and current affairs programmes in 2023: Primary players

Te reo Māori:

Te Karere (television news bulletin and internet, TVNZ, 1983-)

Waatea News (radio news bulletin and internet, Radio Waatea, 2005-)

Te Ao Marama (television news bulletin and internet, Whakaata Māori, 2004-)

Primarily in English:

Marae (television current affairs and internet, TVNZ, 1990-)

The Hui (television current affairs and internet, Newshub, 2016-)

Te Ao with Moana (television current affairs and internet, Whakaata Māori, 2019-)

Paakiwaha (news and current affairs and internet, Radio Waatea, 2002-)

Developments in 2023

The Māori media sector has been in a holding pattern for the past five years, but the pathway ahead is now looking clearer. To recap: In 2018, then Māori Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta launched a review of the sector, named Te Ao Pāpāho ki Tua – Māori Media Sector Shift. It found that restructuring of the sector was necessary to address fragmentation and inefficiencies and to future-proof the industry for the digital age (Mahuta, 2019). However, Mahuta's successor, former broadcaster Willie Jackson, scrapped her recommendations and started again (Jackson, 2020). He set up a reference group that reported the sector was "strongly opposed" to structural change[2].

What has emerged instead is not a long-term strategy, but extra funding for the next couple of years and several new initiatives, particularly in workforce development and regional newsgathering collaborations. Overall, the Māori media field gained an additional $40 million in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, the bulk going to Te Māngai Pāho (TMP) for content creation ($16 million in each financial year) and Whakaata Māori (an extra $4 million in each financial year). These are short-term gains. Still, this money is important, as Māori media has long been inequitably funded compared to its state-funded counterparts, TVNZ and RNZ (Hurihanganui, 2020).

What happens after that time, especially in a straitened economic climate, remains uncertain. It appears that by default, TMP will have to use the levers it has to try and address the fragmentation and inefficiencies identified in the 2018 review. It's clear, reading between the lines of TMP's public reports, that the agency would have welcomed structural reform of some kind from the Māori Media Sector Shift and the merger of RNZ and TVNZ. The agency's board has publicly said that it wants the agency and the sector to capitalise on the momentum for change engendered by those plans, adding, "there remains an expectation that many of the benefits

[2] From page 1 of the document Māori Broadcasting Advisory Panel Repositioning Advice. Personal communication under the Official Information Act, October 8, 2022.

contemplated by the proposed restructure might be achieved through a change in behaviours" (TMP, 2023b, p. 4).

The primary behaviour change it requires is a commitment to data collection and analysis by both TMP and the production houses it funds (TMP, 2023c). As the agency notes, there will be little prospect of increased government funding without being able to make a compelling, data-driven case about the value that the sector brings to revitalisation of te reo (TMP, 2023b).

With this in mind, TMP says it is piloting a more data-driven approach to the funding and evaluation of content and has developed a data tool to measure the impact of content on te reo Māori. This is being piloted with some of its television and radio content providers and will eventually expand to online and social media content. TMP expects that within three years all of its content makers will be using it (TMP, 2023c).

In the agency's statement of performance expectations for 2023 and 2024, it says, "Our focus has been not only on measuring the success of initiatives we fund in simple quantitative terms (audience numbers), but more importantly, trying to better understand the value of what we do for Aotearoa. What stories can we tell about the impact of our funded content? What impact do our investment decisions have for te reo Māori? These are some of the questions we will ask ourselves as we seek to determine how we are contributing to our shared goals for Māori language revitalisation" (TMP, 2023b).

Another behaviour that TMP has been encouraging has been more collaboration between news entities, principally the three Māori-language news providers Te Karere, the news services provided by Whakaata Māori, titled Te Ao Marama, and Waatea News, which holds the TMP-administered contract to provide a five-day radio news service to the iwi network. Various heads of TMP have been trying to encourage more content sharing between the three since 2009, but they have met stout resistance and the argument that pluralism in news is important (Middleton, 2020).

Since 2020, in response to news holes in the regions—and to show the potential fruits of collaboration—TMP has made funding available for what it calls 'Māori Regional News Hubs', an initiative providing collaborative, multimedia news services across iwi radio stations. In 2020, collaborations of iwi stations in four regions were funded—Tainui, Taranaki, Tairāwhiti and Ngāi Tahu; as there is just one iwi station in the South Island, it works independently. In Budget 2022, TMP was allocated a further $10 million over two years to continue and expand its regional Māori news initiative, and the PIJF, administered by NZ On Air, committed $3m (NZ On Air, 2023c). This year, the four hubs had their funding extended. They are:

- Tainui: Te Arawa FM (Rotorua), Tainui Live (Waikato) and Moana Radio (Tauranga), with support from Ngā Iwi FM (Pare Hauraki), Raukawa FM (Tokoroa), Maniapoto FM (Te Kuiti) and Tūwharetoa FM (Tūrangi/Taupō). The news service is called Aukaha Te Tai Pūkōrero.
- Taranaki: Te Korimako o Taranaki and Kia Ora FM. The service is called Te Reo o Te Uru Regional News.
- Tairāwhiti: Radio Ngāti Porou (Ruatorea), Tūranga FM (Turanga-nui-a-Kiwa/Gisborne) and Radio Kahungunu (Ahuriri/Hastings) contribute to the news service, called Kapu Tairāwhiti.
- Ngāi Tahu: Tahu News.

The hubs are expected to provide a mix of news and current affairs content in both te reo Māori and English, and TMP head Larry Parr would like to see them contributing to national programmes like Paakiwaha (Radio Waatea), The Hui (Newshub) and Marae (TVNZ). "There's a range of national programmes that they could contribute to – some in English and some in te reo Māori," he told Radio Waatea (2023). "The idea is it's still a little bit of an experiment and we don't have all the answers, so it would be silly for us to go out and try and be prescriptive. But I think there is an opportunity for Māori news and current affairs right across the spectrum to be more collaborative and therefore more effective."

The Waikato cluster has been a particularly strong performer. Here's Larry Parr again: "The shining example at the moment is Aukaha where there are five iwi stations working together to produce really good-quality content." Eventually, TMP plans to fully fund the existing hubs and support more, with Parr saying Te Tai Tokerau (Northland), Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) and Horowhenua/Kāpiti were priority areas (Te Hiku Media, 2023).

Workforce development

Long-term staff shortages and a lack of training and development have long been recognised as a problem in the Māori news and wider Māori media sector, and the lack of a workforce development plan was one of the issues pinpointed in the Māori Media Sector Shift that has survived.

Whakaata Māori has been funded to lead the development of a workforce strategy (Whakaata Māori, 2022). It convened three workforce development wānanga in 2021 and 2022 to bring together iwi radio and media, independent producers, funders, sector groups and several public media organisations. The third wānanga led to the creation of Te Ohu Whai Pūkenga, a group to provide advice to the Government on workforce development for the Māori media sector. It is chaired by Whakaata Māori head Shane Taurima and includes Lanita Ririnui, executive director of Māori film lobby group Ngā Aho Whakaari; producer Nicole Hoey, TVNZ media executive Blake Ihimaera; and Radio Ngāti Porou manager Erana Keelan-Reedy.

A sector-wide survey in October 2022 highlighted where the gaps were, with 83% of managers raising issues such as lack of budget to pay for salaries, relocation costs and the like; a lack of people with the required skills (83%); inability to compete with other sectors offering higher salaries etc. (66%); lack of te reo Māori speakers (61%). The key technical skills that managers lacked included editors (68%), sound engineers (68%), digital engineers (59%) and writers (59%). Key leadership and/or business development skills in short supply included production management (62%) and revenue creation (55%). Retention is a problem. As one respondent said, "[We are] overworked, underpaid, not well-regarded in the public eye and [there are] very few perks." Said another, "No training plans, no succession plans, insecure tenure and low wages."

This survey fed into Te Rāngi Pāpāho Māori, a report that makes recommendations for enduring workforce development; it was presented to the Minister for Māori Development in 2023. According to Hiria Pointon, kaiurungi whakahaere (chief of staff) at Whakaata Māori, members of the group are now "working with officials on a budget bid for next year. This will be subject to the new government and minister's priorities" (personal communication, October 17, 2023).

The Public Interest Journalism Fund draws to a close

By the time COVID-19 paralysed the world economy in 2020, news media had already seen their lifeblood—advertising—lost to the internet and, amidst staff layoffs, were struggling to find viable business models. The PIJF was a $55m government initiative designed to provide targeted, short-to-medium-term support for public interest journalism in the wake of COVID-19 in three areas: jobs, content and industry development (although the PIJF funded some workforce training and development, this programme was a COVID-19-related stopgap, not a long-term strategy, and unrelated to the workforce development strategy that Whakaata Māori is leading).

Administered by NZ On Air, the PIJF allocated funding across 26 months from May 2021 to June 2023. An interim report has been published, but as some projects will not fully be contracted and completed until early 2026, a full and final analysis is still some way off. However, some figures will not change, and the interim report has calculated that of 445 applications seeking $169m, just 195 (44%) were funded (NZ On Air, 2023b).

Māori news did well, with the Māori media sector gaining $16m, and Māori content $6.4m, reflecting the PIJF's stated aim to address the inequity of Māori representation both within the country's newsrooms and in the content they create.

Below are summarised the most impactful initiatives for Māori-language and Māori-language news in the fund's final two rounds (6 and 7). The information is from the NZ On Air website (NZ On Air, n.d.).

> Te Rito, a collaborative journalism training scheme between NZME, Whakaata Māori, Pacific Media Network and Newshub to increase newsroom diversity, graduated 23 journalists in its first year. A second year of funding brought a second cohort of 12 cadets from Māori, Pacific and diverse backgrounds. Newshub, Pacific Media Network, Radio Ngāti Porou and NZME also won funding to hire Te Rito graduates from the first intake.
>
> Te Ia Ka Oho was a cadetship programme in te reo Māori journalism based in Taranaki and led by veteran reporter Roihana Nuri. It was nine months long and trained five bilingual journalists from the region (NZ On Air, 2023a).
>
> The Māori and Pacific e-magazine, E-Tangata, gained funding to continue four news roles for another year: senior writers for both Māori and Pacific news, an editor, and a digital marketing manager.
>
> Stuff gained funding to hire a translator to provide daily translations of stories.

In iwi radio, Te Reo Irirangi o Maniapoto gained funding to retain a video news journalist for a second year and Kahungunu to keep a digital content creator and a producer for a second year.

Various mainstream media outlets won funding to hire kaupapa Māori editors or writers to provide strategic leadership on Māori issues and/or generate content, among them Kōwhai Media, the Pantograph Punch, NZME, the Gisborne Herald, Metro magazine, Newshub and The Spinoff.

Once PIJF funding is exhausted, the media outlets are on their own. Whether media owners are willing to invest in these roles will not become clear until next year. There has already been some disquiet that at Stuff, three PIJF-funded fixed-term roles with the Pou Tiaki team, which generates news content from Māori and minority communities, will lapse early next year and will not be renewed. This comes amid major restructuring at the media company (Chapman, 2023).

However, as a journalist and observer, the increase in the quality and quantity of content through the PIJF has been obvious and welcome, with an increase in Māori content evident. This boost has been timely, coming as mainstream Aotearoa is displaying great enthusiasm for learning te reo (Stats NZ, 2022) and Ministry of Education programmes for teachers are increasing the use of Māori language in the classroom (Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori, 2023). A disappointment has been the way in which the PIJF, an honest attempt to support democracy, by plugging gaps in regional news, journalist training and current affairs reporting, has been weaponised by certain political parties and protest groups (Jennings, 2023; Peacock, 2023c).

A new government: Implications for Māori media

At the time this report comes out in early December, the centre-right coalition of National, ACT and New Zealand First will be very new, so it is to be expected that the landscape for Māori media will be unclear. TMP has said that once the coalition is confirmed and before the end of the year, it will go to its content creators to "reset and map a pathway forward", the results of which will feed into the requisite briefing to the incoming Minister (TMP, 2023a).

However, we can draw some inferences about the future from what was and was not said by National, ACT and New Zealand First during the election campaign. Firstly, broadcasting got very little attention at all. There was nothing in the National or ACT policy manifestos about broadcasting, and broadcasting does not feature at all in National's plan for the first 100 days (Peacock, 2023c). New Zealand First broadcasting spokesperson is veteran broadcaster Jenny Marcroft, and the party's manifesto acknowledged that news media were under strain and raised some sensible ideas (New Zealand First, 2023; Peacock, 2023c). However, these ideas were undermined by a petition on its website, promoted by party leader Winston Peters, which called for a Royal Commission into "media bias and media manipulation" (New Zealand First, n.d.).

There was just one broadcasting debate during the election period, held by advocacy group Better Public Media, which campaigns for a complete public media platform such as ABC in Australia, BBC in the UK or RTE in Ireland. Just three parties were represented: Labour's Willie Jackson, New Zealand First's Jenny Marcroft and the Green Party's Ricardo Menéndez March (Better Public Media, n.d.).

While broadcasting was somewhat under the radar, the anti-Māori prejudice of coalition partners ACT and to a lesser extent New Zealand First was a strong feature of this campaign (Heikell, 2023; McConnell, 2023; Pearse, 2023). Whether this prejudice will be curbed by the realities of coalition politics remains to be seen, and also unknown is how these attitudes may influence Māori broadcasting policy and funding.

7. Conclusion

Wayne Hope

Mediated public spheres, in principle, facilitate freedoms of expression, publication, representation and argumentation against state intrusion and commercial encroachment. Such freedoms should advance bicultural and multicultural recognition against the backdrop of a contested national past. During 2023, in Aotearoa New Zealand, broadcasters, print and online publications confronted to varying extents the economic power of platforms, streaming companies and financial media owners. The recently elected National-ACT-New Zealand First Government will not promote remedial measures. Broadcasting Media and Communications Minister Melissa Lee is unlikely to support the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill or compensatory levies on social media platforms. New public journalism initiatives and the very principle of a new public media entity would be anathematic to all coalition partners. Meanwhile, far-right disinformation from the dark web circulates outward into websites, podcasts and the blogosphere as Māori media holds firm.

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