

The Chairman  
The Media Advisory Group  
c/- Colin Holden  
Manager, Arts and Media Policy  
Ministry for Culture and Heritage  
WELLINGTON

Via email: colin.holden@mch.govt.nz

02 April, 2018

Dear Panellists,

We are pleased to know how widely you are canvassing the screen sector and would like to add our voices – and perspectives as senior content creators and significant industry employers – to the discussion around Public Media.

We, and the wider WIFT membership (of which there are more than 750) are supportive of any initiatives to increase and improve opportunities to tell New Zealand stories. We have seen various attempts in NZ and around the world to grow and support local content and have paid close attention to the successes and struggles; our hope is that your recommendations will ensure funding put into the industry is used to maximum benefit for Kiwi audiences and the health of a sustainable industry.

To that end, we would like to make two key points:

- **SUPPORT FOR NZOA:** We absolutely agree the NZ public need better funded media. We also admire the work done by RNZ and NZOA and believe both are in critical need of more funding. From our perspective, NZOA has always been lean and responsive to changes in audience viewing habits – as evidenced by the extensive consultation that led to the recent revamp of their funding model. Of critical value are NZOA's minimal overheads and commitment to maximising funding being put into content. We know NZOA has done everything it can to contain costs, while still reaching diverse audiences and underpinning parts the sector; it deserves greater support.
- **CONTENT V INFRASTRUCTURE:** The New Zealand industry has the talent and technology required to provide Kiwi audiences with additional public media content. NZ also has sufficient platforms to deliver that content. What we don't have is sufficient funding to create *the volume and quality of local content viewers want and expect*. Additionally, we have seen that previous spending on infrastructure (such as additional channels), without enough resource to fund quality content over a long period, has not been successful. We would, therefore, recommend increased funding to NZOA for content over spending on the setup and running costs of a new free-to-air channel as proposed with RNZ+. (That this has been proposed as a linear channel, in the current climate, seems even riskier.) What is critical is to incentivise and support content for the linear and on-demand platforms already in existence and reaching varied audiences (including RNZ's digital channels). The criteria for what is funded can be defined to ensure the Government's objectives are met.

A note that we would also hope that any new Commission sitting above NZOA and RNZ did not simply add a costly layer of bureaucracy – taking funding away from content for audiences, and diverting the time of both organisations. Given NZOA’s track record of responsible management of resources and of delivering on their cultural mandate (within significant constraints), we would query the need for another entity, and would be concerned a PMFC risks pitting RNZ and NZOA against each other. We are, however, conscious that such an organisation, run in a lean and nimble way, also has great potential to provide a valuable and responsive voice for the wider industry, especially in these fast-changing times.

With our best wishes as you consider your recommendations. Please don’t hesitate to contact any of us, or Patricia Watson (Executive Director, WIFT), if you wish to follow up on any of the points raised.

Sincerely,

Kelly Martin	Rachel Antony	Robin Scholes	Philly de Lacey
CEO	CEO	CEO	CEO
South Pacific Pictures	Greenstone	Jump Film & TV	Screentime NZ
WIFT President	WIFT Member	WIFT Member	WIFT Member