



11 February 2022

[REDACTED]
McGuinness Institute Te Hononga Waka
Level 2
5 Cable Street
Wellington 6011
By email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Official Information request and response

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act ("OIA") dated 23rd December 2021.

Please find attached a list of responses to your queries.

Note that on 31 January 2021, we made a partial transfer to Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage for questions that we were unable to answer within our organisation. (Questions 1, 3, 15 and 19). Manatū Taonga will provide a response for those transferred questions.

For your information, funding provided by NZ On Air for all successful projects is [searchable](#) on our website. You can also [sign up](#) to receive our regular industry newsletter via our website.

You have the right to refer this response to the Ombudsman if you are dissatisfied with it. More information on how to do this is [here](#). NZ On Air proactively releases information in accordance with the Government's commitment to the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan. This includes publishing responses to requests for information under the OIA. Please note that this response (with your name removed) will be published on the NZ On Air website shortly and will remain on our website for 12 months.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Kerry
HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES

Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF)

Question 1: Was a risk assessment completed to identify risks to Aotearoa New Zealand's current democracy? If yes, can you please provide a copy?

This question was transferred to Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage to respond to.

Question 2: What checks and balances have been put in place to prevent actual or perceived influence by the Crown and wider government? Note: This is to counter the risks identified in Question 1.

The funding is administered at arms-length from Government via the autonomous crown entity NZ On Air. We cannot be directed by the Minister on cultural or content matters. Further, NZ On Air is forbidden (via the Broadcasting Act) from being involved in editorial content.

Funding decisions made under the PIJF are considered by a panel including industry experts.

Question 3: How is the PIJF designed to help create new commercial media models?

This question was transferred to Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage to respond to.

Question 4: More broadly, does a vision for a new commercial media model exist? Note: The Cabinet paper implies the PIJF is to help the industry given the decline of traditional commercial media models. It seems that without that clarity, it would be difficult to fund appropriately or to measure success.

The design of the PIJF has reflected the Government's ambition (as outlined in the Investing In Sustainable Journalism Cabinet paper) to support the media sector to transition to more sustainable business models by funding Targeted Roles that improve the provision and sustainability of PIJ. Ongoing consultation with the industry (including an Industry Advisory Panel) is a further mechanism for the industry to advocate for funding opportunities that address sustainable business models

The measures of success for the fund are focused on audience outcomes and engagement with public interest journalism content as this is the mandate of the NZ Broadcasting Act that governs NZ On Air.

Question 5: Was the PIJF created and supported only by the Crown, or was a vote taken by the House in support of this initiative? Note: For example, if the House was invited to discuss and support the creation of the PIJF, this would, in our view, lead to a better democratic platform and ideally the discussion might lead to a better designed system.

It was a Cabinet decision – see [Cabinet paper](#)

Question 6: Is there a regular public report on the PIJF, and if yes, is this required to be tabled in the House? If a report has or is to be prepared, please provide a soft copy or link. Note: If the report is required to be tabled in the House, we understand members (or if sent to a committee, committee members) would be able to ask questions of the author/s. In our view, this would be a better democratic process. Please note we are aware of the following statement on NZ on Air's website (see here) but do not consider this a comprehensive report on the PIJF.

The outcomes of the PIJF will be reported as part of NZ On Air's statutory reporting requirements by way of an Annual Report, tabled in Parliament, and appearance before a select committee as requested.

Question 7: We note that the number of journalists in receipt of funding from PIJF has been reported on your website as at 24 September 2021(see here). Can we obtain a comprehensive list as at 1 December 2021?

As at 27 January, the total number of funded roles is 139. 108 roles were funded in Round 2 which focused solely on roles. To date, 98 of those roles have been filled and 11 more are close to, or likely to be, contracted. A further 13 non-incremental (existing) roles were also funded in Round 2 and as such are already in place and 18 targeted roles (non-content producing roles that support journalism) were funded in Round 3.

Questions 8: Has any politician been given the names of these journalists? Note: We note that only the names of organisations are provided (see here). Our view is that either none or all members of parliament should be provided with the names as well as the organisations (e.g. equal access to information).

The funding is for roles, and the outputs of those roles, not individuals. NZ On Air does not require this information. As such, no list of names of journalists has been given to any politicians.

Question 9: Do the journalists know they are funded directly by government to deliver public interest content?

Yes

Question 10: Have there been any reviews of the content of articles written by journalists funded to provide public interest content? If yes, can you please provide a copy? Furthermore, has research been undertaken to compare the content of funded public interest journalists with non-funded journalism?

To date, NZ On Air has not initiated any reviews. We have no record of other reviews written. We have no knowledge of research being undertaken to compare funded and non-funded content

Question 11: Has there been consideration of the journalists being required to state in their articles that they are funded to provide 'public interest' journalism? Note: Our view is that this would enable readers to know these journalists (and their articles) are being funded especially for public interest and therefore have a higher level of responsibility to report in a public interest manner. This would enable and invite readers to make complaints if they thought an article was biased or not in the public interest.

It is a requirement of funding that all articles/broadcasts produced with NZ On Air funding (and specifically PIJF) are identified as such. This is by way of a specific PIJF logo, or appropriate text, on every article/broadcast. There is more information on this requirement publicly available on the NZ On Air website [here](#).

Question 12: What requirements are placed on the journalists who receive funding through the PIJF to ensure they explore and publish stories in a non-partisan manner, and how is that content monitored to ensure it meets the desired purpose?

The PIJF requires funded journalism to adhere to the standards laid out by the Media Council and Broadcasting Standards Authority of accuracy, fairness and balance. The Fund is careful not to exert editorial control beyond ensuring funded applicants deliver on the outputs they agreed to in their funding contracts.

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Question 13: The statement on the NZ on Air website, dated 24 September 2021 (see [here](#)) states that the 'performance of the funded roles is measured on content outputs'. How is this measure monitored and reported?

The PIJF uses a new automated tracking system to measure online content outputs using an embedded code which identifies funded content. Funded applicants are also required to provide reports on social media reach and performance of content as part of their contractual reporting which must be delivered ahead of each funding drawdown request.

Question 14: Given that two rounds of funding have already progressed, has a report been written on the performance measures? If yes, can you please provide a copy?

Performance is measured on an annual basis, or at the end of a project. Public reporting is at a macro level in NZ On Air's Annual Report. Note the first year of reporting will be following the end of the 2021/22 year.

Question 15: Can you clarify the relationship between COVID-19 and the establishment of the PIJF?

Note: Given that COVID-19 is 'the dominant story' in the news and the government's response to COVID-19 has and will continue to be the key electoral issue, linking the two, in our view, creates an unnecessary political risk. This is particularly the case given that the problem the PIJF is trying to solve was amplified by COVID-19 – not generated by COVID-19. Our view is that any investment in journalism should be ring-fenced and managed by the House (not by the Crown); in other words, a non-partisan view should be sought, heard, acted upon, and independently reviewed.

This question was transferred to Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage to respond to.

Local Democracy Reporting (LDR) pilot

Question 16: Given it is December 2021, on what basis is the LDR pilot continuing: Does it continue to exist in its own right, or does it no longer exist (as absorbed by the PIJF)?

The Local Democracy Reporting scheme successfully applied for funding under the PIJF, meeting the objectives of public interest journalism. That funding was agreed in the December 2021 funding round.

Question 17: Can we obtain a copy of the report/s on the LDR pilot? **Note:** We are interested to know how it was funded, how it worked, how it has been assessed and by whom?

A review by Dr Gavin Ellis is available on the NZ On Air website [here](#).

Other government funding of public interest journalism

Question 18: Does NZ on Air have a policy regarding the naming of journalists funded especially for the purpose of generating public interest content? If yes, can you please provide a copy?

Please see the answer to Q 11.

Question 19: Are there any other situations where the government directly funds specific journalists? If yes, please advise the name of the fund (or other means), how much is funded, and what funds have been provided to what journalists?

This question was transferred to Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage to respond to.

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Question 20: Are you aware of any additional funding provided to journalists or media organisations that relate directly to COVID-19? If yes, please provide details.

Manatū Taonga | Ministry for Culture and Heritage provided a publication grant at the end of 2021. Details are available on their website [here](#).

Statistics

Question 21: The statement on the NZ on Air website, dated 24 September 2021 (see here) states that ‘Statistics NZ figures show that the number of journalists halved between 2006 and 2018.’ Can you please provide the source for this data and ideally the number of journalists in:

1. 2006,
2. 2018,
3. 2019,
4. 2020, and
5. 2021?

Census report figures were sourced from Statistics NZ as reported by [P. Smellie Discussion Paper: Options To Improve The Environment For New Zealand Journalism](#)

1. Census 2006: 4,284 reporters, editors and sub-editors
2. Census 2018: 2,061 print, radio TV journalists or ‘other writers

As the next Census will not be until 2023 there are no updated journalist number statistics.