



29 September 2022

S22.15 oral

Oral submission to the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee on the Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media Bill

Presenters:

Sue Kedgley and Rae Duff

Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee

Jamie Strange (Lab, Chairperson); Naisi Chen (Lab, Deputy Chair); Glen Bennet (Lab); Judith Collins (Nat); Mellissa Lee (Nat).

Introduction

1. Presenting this submission is Sue Kedgley. Rae Duff, NCWNZ Parliamentary Watch Committee, is in attendance. We welcome your questions on this submission.

Summary

2. Thank you for the opportunity to submit to you today on the Aotearoa Public Media bill.
3. In general, the National Council of Women Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa supports the bill and its objective to establish a new public media entity that will deliver relevant and trusted public media content to all New Zealanders.
4. We agree with many previous submitters that it is crucial that the new entity is seen to be independent of the influence of government or politicians and we would like to see a strengthening of the requirements for the new organisation to be editorially independent and to ensure that its personnel, especially journalists, cannot be influenced by politicians in any shape or form.
5. We support the key objectives of the Bill, including the obligation to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensure that at least two Board members have knowledge of te ao Māori and tikanga Māori.

6. The main purpose of our submission, however, is to urge the committee to include a specific provision in the legislation that the new entity promotes gender equity and women's empowerment and that at least half of the membership of the governing board is comprised of women, including Māori, Pasifika, ethnic women and non-binary or gender diverse members.
7. It is well established that the media plays a powerful role in shaping attitudes towards men and women and in perpetuating stereotypes of women and reinforcing unconscious bias. A 2019 Harvard University study found that in general, women are far less likely than men to be seen in the media; that the media continues to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities, and that the gender-imbalanced picture of society that media frequently present can reinforce and perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes¹.
8. We saw an example of this in 2015, when TVNZ ran a controversial Battle of the Babes competition to see who was the most attractive woman presenter.
9. Around the same time, it was revealed that on average women presenters at TVNZ were paid \$40,000 less than their male peers, and that not one of its top earning presenters were women.
10. Women still make up only 15% of sports news on television and MPs in parliament's Commerce Select committee, including the Hon Judith Collins, have over the years criticised TVNZ for its portrayal of women and called on the organisation to address its attitude towards gender equality in its news coverage, and not to categorise or stereotype women.
11. We believe that public service media entities have a particular responsibility to promote gender equity, diversity and women's empowerment, and that's why we believe the new entity should have a specific mandate to do this embedded in the legislation.
12. We note that successive Ministers for Women have called for all public service entities to have 50% women on their boards, and we would like to see this spelled out in the legislation.
13. We would like to see a requirement that the new entity adopt a comprehensive Gender Equity strategy, as many large organisations in New Zealand already have, to ensure there is a focus on gender, or gender lens, right across the organisation.
14. UNESCO has developed gender sensitive indicators for media organisations to measure their gender awareness, the way they portray women in their editorial content and to measure

¹ Rattan A, Chilazi S, Georgeac O, Bohnet I. 2016. Tackling the Underrepresentation of Women in Media. Harvard Business Review, June 06, 2016. <https://hbr.org/2019/06/tackling-the-underrepresentation-of-women-in-media>

progress towards gender equity and we would recommend that the new entity adopt these indicators as well.

15. Embedding the goal of gender equity and women's empowerment in this legislation would be in line with commitments that successive government have made, by signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women², to embody the principle of the equality of men and women in appropriate legislation, and to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women. There's no point in signing these documents if we don't implement them in practice.
16. In conclusion, while we support the general objectives of the proposed new government entity, we are not yet clear how it will run in practice, once TVNZ and RNZ have been merged into the new entity, as there is little detail about the financial model, monitoring framework or accountability arrangements. All of these functions have been left for an establishment board to sort out.

Questions

Q: Judith Collins, (Nat). NCWNZ is considered to be the premium representative group for at least 80% NZ Women. Has your organisation been consulted during the drafting of this Bill?

A: Sue responded that we weren't consulted during the drafting of the Bill but we are very pleased to be able to present our views now.

Q: Naisi Chen, (Lab). Are there other women's media groups that you know of?

A: Sue responded that we were aware of the Women in Film and TV NZ organisation and also that there was a Women in the Media group that was launched in about 2019 and a much earlier group formed in the 1990s. All looking at the challenges faced by women in the media.

Q: Melissa Lee, (Nat). You mention the large pay gap between the men and women top earning presenters, but have you forgotten the 'Mother of the Nation' – Judy Bailey?

A: Sue replied that Television New Zealand did not renew her contract despite her immense popularity, so she didn't hold that position for long and apart from Judy we see very few older women on TV or in the media. Neither do we see ethnic minorities although that is changing slowly. Women presenters are more valued for their looks!

² United Nations. 1979. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

Q: Jamie Strange (Lab). Do you know of any examples where the 50% representation of women is spelt out in legislation?

A: Sue responded that it has been government and Ministry of Women policy for many years for public sector Boards and has finally been achieved, we now need to focus on private or commercial Boards.

Conclusion

Chair Jamie Strange (Lab) thanked us for our submission.