

Friday 8th March 2024

To Hon Paul Goldsmith and Leuanae Laulu Mac Leuanae  
Cc: Hon Melissa Lee and Hon Tama Potaka

Parliament Buildings  
Molesworth Street  
Wellington 6160

**Re: Proposal to protect the THREE News television archive**

Dear esteemed members of parliament, and the Secretary for Culture and Heritage,

We are writing to request that the TV3/THREE news archive be registered by the Chief Executive of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage as a protected object under the Protected Objects Act.

Further to this, we are also requesting that Minister Goldsmith begins talks to acquire the THREE news archive under section 4 of the same act. It is clear that this archive meets and exceeds the requirements relating to Documentary Heritage Objects under that act.

Although we realise that Newshub will still be operating at the time you receive this letter, we would like to draw your attention to the loss of the Fairfax photo archive, and the disappearance from public view (on ROVA) of all Today FM content, as examples of why we are seeking the registration of the archive as soon as possible. Even if the THREE staff proposal to continue Newshub in some form is accepted, the archive could still be at risk due to the costs of maintenance.

We are further spurred to seek this registration, due to Discovery Warner's recent history of wiping content for USA tax breaks, with around US\$3.5 billion dollars of content wiped after their merger in 2022.

News archives require ongoing expenditure to maintain and use substantial space for hard drives (and for older material, tapes). When News companies have ceased operation in other countries, there are examples of vast quantities of material being wiped and the tapes and hard drives sold as blanks. It would be a shocking loss to New Zealand historians, documentarians, and citizens with an interest in the public record, if this were to happen to the THREE News archive which covers 35 years of history. Some have even gone as far as to say that any such act of erasure would constitute cultural vandalism.

While archive maintenance does require staffing and moderate investment, these costs can be offset and even recouped by a revenue generation model when it comes to supplying filmmakers and members of the public with requested historical material.

However, we believe it is imperative that this archive material be owned and managed by (or at least have controlling interests managed by) the New Zealand Government, through the oversight of a ministerial department or national organisation.

For instance, to help offset the costs of archive maintenance, TVNZ licensed its television archive to Getty Images. Unfortunately, with charges reaching thousands of dollars per minute for re-broadcast rights, these costs can be prohibitive (even for experienced New Zealand Producers with NZ On Air funding) when it comes to making historical documentaries using this content. This, alongside New Zealand copyright law having no Fair Use allowance, has resulted in reduced levels of NZ historical documentary content being produced, and therefore a diminishing understanding of historical, and cultural context among New Zealand's population.

Under these current content ownership and copyright settings, everyday New Zealanders will quickly lose access to knowledge that is their rightful cultural heritage, and it will be too expensive for those who have this knowledge to share it meaningfully with the rest of the population.

But there is a solution.

TV3/THREE has had a news sharing partnership with Māori Television / Whakaata Māori which has been in place for over 20 years. Māori Television staff regularly use and are intimately familiar with the THREE news archive. Therefore, the cheapest and most logistically practical option for ensuring that the New Zealand public still has reasonable access to the THREE news archive, would be for Māori Television to be funded to purchase the library (along with its associated database) and to also be funded to both store and make the archive accessible to NZ documentarians. This would in no way undermine the financial stability of the TVNZ/Getty relationship, as the THREE archive has always been more accessible to documentarians than the Getty archive.

This proposed solution of Māori Television being funded to buy and manage this archive, could be achieved without additional government cost, by shifting NZ On Air's annual funding of THREE news production, and passing that onto Whakaata Māori for their annual archive maintenance. Over the past ten years, NZ On Air has spent an average of 1-2 million dollars per year on Newshub material, including productions such as The Nation, The Vote, election year specials and live special event coverage.

While we believe that ongoing new production is also important and that new money should be spent on this, we also believe that new production should not be at the expense of losing our audiovisual history.

There is also an opportunity here to reach out to wealthy international and domestic benefactors involved in the New Zealand Screen Industry, for additional funding.

Regardless of how this archival transfer project is funded, we believe it to be an urgent and necessary project, with regards to the preservation of New Zealand's culture and heritage.

We look forward to your response and would be happy to assist you in whatever capacity you believe would be of most use.

Yours sincerely

**Benedict Reid**

Former Māori Television Head Librarian  
Former Associate Head of Funding NZ On Air

**Matthew Donaldson**

Former Māori Television Assistant Programmer  
Former TV3 Programme Scheduler  
Documentarian

**John Barnett CNZM**

Film and Television Producer

**Gina Dellabarca MNZM**

Show Me Shorts Festival Director

**Professor Annie Goldson ONZM, FRSNZ**

Documentarian, Academic

**Janine Morell-Gunn ONZM**

Producer

**Kim E Baker**

Former head of rights at NZ On Screen

**Steve Barr**

Scriptwriter, Producer, Former TVNZ Commissioner

**Keith Barclay**

Editor of ShowNews

**Alex Behse**

Producer

**Pietra Brett Kelly**

Documentarian

**Dan Buckingham**

Producer, Executive Director of ABLE trust

**Jackie Dennis**

Executive Director of Script to Screen

**Whetū Fala**

Content Writer, Director, Producer

**Irene Gardiner**

Producer

**Duncan Greive**

Founder of The Spinoff

**Dane Giraud**

Screenwriter, Producer

**Richard Harman**

Journalist, Former Producer and Former TV3 and TVNZ News

**Nicole Hoey**

Producer, former NZ On Air board member

**Jarrold Holt**

Screenwriter, Producer

**Ryan Hutchings**

Screenwriter, Producer

**Paula Whetu Jones**

Director, Screenwriter

**Roseanne Liang**

Director, Screenwriter

**Bailey Mackey**

Television Producer

**Vicki Makutu**

Producer, Director

**Nigel McCulloch**

Screenwriter, Producer

**Michael McDonnell**

NZIFF Head of Programming

**Mark McNeill**

Documentarian

**Mark Prebble**

Show Me Shorts Festival Manager, Writer, Producer

**Alex Reed**

Producer

**Tui Ruwhiu**

Producer, Executive Director of DEGANZ

**Ant Timpson**

Film Producer, Former Film Festival Programmer

**Dr Paul Trotman**  
Documentarian