



**CHANNEL  
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TELEVISION

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## **Exploring digital convergence: Issues for policy and legislation**

### **Channel North submission**

16 October 2015

Convergence Review Team,  
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We are responding to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage invitation to consider “convergence in the telecommunications, information technology, media and entertainment (TIME) sectors”.

Channel North is a community television station in Whangārei, envisaged by community people in 2004, launched in 2008, with four partners Manaia View School, Ngati Hine-FM, One Double Five Community House and NorthTec Polytec. It is a community-led project where community people have invited business and state partners. The station has a history of collaboration with local media, has close community and business stakeholders. It was an early adopter using UHF fibre and the internet to stream television, provide video-on-demand, and engage on social media. Channel North provides hands-on local media learning experience and equipment to young children, teens and adults; giving them the ability to produce films and broadcast. The station, its skilled workers and its resources, give access to local people (community producers) who want to tell their stories on film and television. Channel North has submitted to NZ-on-Air a proposal that draws the station into closer partnership with local media and uses multiple platforms to reach viewers.

1. We agree that convergence describes the common delivery of previously discrete service functions such as broadcasting and telecommunication overshad digital infrastructure, reducing

the boundaries between previously separate industries and enabling transmedia connection with audiences.

2. We believe New Zealand's current regulations and policies need to change to account for convergence.
3. The proposed work programme covers areas that will address some areas of convergence.
4. To address convergence, the Government should also ensure support for local access to media and the creation of local content. This increased support is in order to counter increased global online swamping of local content, likened to a second wave of Colonisation of Media and Culture.
5. There are policy and funding level barriers that reduce our community television station's ability to benefit from, or respond to, convergence. The role of public and community television in providing local professional told local stories (public television) and stories produced by local non-professional people and community groups needs to be strengthened in public policy. Public policy needs to prioritise access to spectrum and transmedia for both public and community media. This is further addressed under specific recommendations.

### **Specific recommendations**

It is recommended that government broadcast policy be changed to include community and regional television, in common with community radio, as a third broadcast sector which facilitates participation in broadcasting. The Broadcast Act (1989, 2003, 2007) needs to be aligned with the Ministry of Cultural and Heritage Regional and Community Broadcast Framework (2011) in its acknowledgement of the participatory role of community television.

Spectrum needs to be considered a common resource for local people. It is recommended that a subsidised community-licence spectrum channel nation-wide be set aside as a broadcast commons for local use. The Radio-communications Act (1989) needs to be altered to include at least one channel nation-wide as a community commons available to local communities.

It is recommended that the charges for government terrestrial broadcast equipment and sites be substantially subsidised for community television so that it is accessible for local communities to use. Changes are needed to the legislation that directs Kordia. Kordia could be directed under their social responsibility obligations to charge community stations at a heavily subsidised rate (See Section 4, Statement of corporate intent, Kordia Group Ltd, 2014) .

Overall operational funding for community television should at least be comparable with funding for community radio, which received 5% of the NZ-on-Air budget in 2014 (New Zealand on Air, 2014). This funding should provide operational resources to facilitate communities to participate. Changes are needed to the NZ-on-Air funding criteria so that they cite participation rather than audience numbers as an outcome measure.

Must-carry legislation for community television needs to be developed to be applied to Television-Apps public and commercial operators. As commercial entities develop television broadcast through the internet Television-Apps, it is recommended that there be a totally subsidised must-carry for community television.

It is recommended that contestable funding from NZ-on-Air be available for general programmes collectively transmitted on regional and community stations. This is specifically directed to Aotearoa/New Zealand content of a type important to NZ-on-Air but difficult to achieve on national channels, especially in prime-time. Further, it is recommended that all films that have been fully government funded be available for second broadcast on community and regional stations.

Channel North would be please to discuss these issues further.



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