

29 May 2019

Bernadette Cavanagh
Chief Executive
Manatū Taonga Ministry of Culture and Heritage

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Dear Bernadette

I am writing to express RNZ's interest in retaining the 102 FM radio band for public broadcasting use.

As New Zealand's primary non-commercial public media organisation, RNZ sees value in providing a publicly owned outlet focused on the interests of Aotearoa's increasingly culturally diverse population, and catering for audiences which are not a priority for commercial media.

The strength of RNZ's current work is in providing trustworthy news, current affairs and information, and classical and adjacent music free of advertising or agendas. By their nature, these formats are of most interest to more mature New Zealanders.

RNZ believes it can greatly enhance its service for a far wider range of New Zealanders by providing a greater depth of content built around music and popular culture. We believe a radio station would provide the crucial core to this service, which would also incorporate online, visual and social media aspects.

In 2002 the government set aside frequencies in the 101-108 FM MHz band for non-commercial and community radio use. The plan was for 101 – 104 FM to be utilised for nation-wide public service radio stations including:

- RNZ National (as it is currently known) being introduced to 101 FM (previously AM only)
- RNZ Concert consolidated on a single nation-wide FM frequency (102 FM - this did not eventuate)
- A nation-wide Pasifika radio network (103 FM – Niu FM, Pacific Media Network)
- A nation-wide Maori radio network (104 FM - this did not eventuate).

104-108 FM was assigned to Access, community and Low Power FM stations.

102 FM was later made available to commercial operator Media Works in unusual circumstances, which broadcast Kiwi FM until it was closed in 2015.

102 FM is yet to be utilized for its intended public broadcasting purpose.

These frequencies are a significant publicly-owned resource which RNZ would like to deliver to the people on. We want to better fulfil our legislated purpose by providing a greater range of New Zealand music and youth culture, entertainment and information than we can within our current outlets. Doing this will support Aotearoa's unique culture, contribute to the wellbeing of society and provide non-commercial media that treats more New Zealanders as citizens, rather than consumers.

Why Radio?

Radio continues to have significant audience support in all age groups in New Zealand. It is a cost-effective means of connecting with people across the motu, and is free at the point of consumption. Its immediacy creates a sense of occasion and provides shared experiences. Its intimacy supports strong and loyal relationships between broadcaster and audiences. It is primarily aural, like music, and the two have gone together since radio was invented.

As RNZ sees from the synergy between RNZ National and www.rnz.co.nz, radio provides a central core from which to generate and support online and real-world stories and events which connect with new communities of interest. Digital media provides a world of opportunity but disperses audience attention. Continuous audio streams will persist, regardless of evolving means of distribution, but currently broadcast radio remains the best way to regularly engage a sizable community.

We believe this initiative supports current policy goals of the Minister for Culture and Heritage, and work currently underway by the Ministry regarding New Zealand music, and we seek your support to make this happen.

We would like to meet with you in July to discuss this proposition. My assistant Heather Abbott will be in touch to arrange a time that suits.

Yours sincerely



Paul Thompson
Chief Executive & Editor-in-Chief