

Tēnā tātou katoa.

In my opening statement I would like to firstly note that the 2018 / 19 year has been another outstanding year for RNZ, the nation's most trusted media organisation.

However, I would like to address some important issues that have been highly topical over the last week.

The Board, Management and staff of RNZ are committed to our Charter. Our Charter is broad and requires, amongst other things, that we:

- *'stimulate, support, and reflect a wide range of music, including New Zealand composition and performance', and*
- *'provide programmes which balance special interest with those of wide appeal, recognising the interests of all age groups'.*

Recognising that we were not comprehensively fulfilling the requirements of our Charter, the RNZ Board directed Management to identify options to strengthen our relevance to all New Zealanders - regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic standing or age.

We take very seriously the responsibility associated with being *'Te Reo Irirangi o Aotearoa'*, Radio New Zealand - the public media organisation for all New Zealanders.

We, as a Board, could quite simply have sailed along comfortably over the tenure of our three year terms and accepted the status quo, or, as we have done, chosen to make some unpopular but ultimately appropriate decisions about the future of RNZ.

In terms of responding to some key questions raised about RNZ Concert, and to provide appropriate context to this select committee hearing, I wish to provide the following background information.

1. Did RNZ explore the option of securing a third FM network for our planned service for young New Zealanders?

Yes we did. Ministry of Culture and Heritage were approached in mid 2019 to see if an FM network could be made available for broadening of our services. We discussed the option of the availability of 102FM network and the advice was that it would be incredibly difficult for RNZ to get access to them with the required funding. The 102FM network has been set aside for youth radio for more than 20 years and no Government, until now, has shown an appetite to take it off the shelf and allow us to provide that public service to New Zealand.

2. Did RNZ follow an appropriate process in keeping the Minister adequately informed of our new service for young New Zealanders?

Absolutely. The Minister was briefed on our new strategy and the potential impact upon RNZ Concert in August 2019, October 2019 and most recently on January 29th of this year.

3. Did RNZ ignore the request of the Minister at the meeting on January 29th?

We definitely did not ignore the request. We believed that the Minister had agreed to RNZ not delaying our internal staff consultation on potential changes to RNZ Concert whilst MCH explored the option of reviewing the FM frequency previously reserved for youth music.

There was clearly a misunderstanding as the Minister thought that our consultation process would be halted whilst MCH looked into the FM frequency availability (as they were tasked to do at the meeting).

There is no logical reason why RNZ would purposely ignore such a request from the Minister, aside from there being a significant misunderstanding.

4. Is the new RNZ service for young New Zealanders simply another 'youth music station'?

Absolutely not!

Our vision remains to create a multi-media platform primarily for young New Zealanders which will include:

- Music produced by local artists as well as live performances (the level of locally produced music will be unrivalled).
- Commissioned programming content for young people that will explore topics relevant to them, such as civic, financial, lifestyle and well-being issues.
- Access to complementary RNZ services focused on younger audiences such as podcasts.
- Trusted news made by and for younger audiences.
- A range of new employment opportunities.

It is our intent to provide an opportunity for young New Zealanders to build a community designed by them, produced by them, presented by them, and in doing so creating a lifelong connection with RNZ. It will also have significant elements for Maori, Pasifika and Asian audiences that reflect NZ in 2020 and beyond.

The Board and Management of RNZ is committed to fulfilling our Charter obligations and significantly increasing our relevance to more New Zealanders, particularly a younger generation of New Zealanders.

In conclusion, it is great news that RNZ and the Government are united on the new strategy - and this opens the opportunity to launch our new service for young New Zealanders while enhancing RNZ Concert.