

## Maori broadcasting: Radio services (ARCHIVED)

OFFICE OF MINISTER OF MAORI AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman

Cabinet Economic Committee

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### Related Documents

- Maori Radio Going Well (Media Release)
- Maori Broadcasting: Questions and Answers

### Executive Summary

1. At its meeting of 1 September 1997, Cabinet, inter alia, "invited the Ministers of Communications and Maori Affairs to report to the Cabinet Committee on Industry and Environment (CIE) by 30 November 1997 on the adequacy of present arrangements for Maori radio" [CAB (97) M33/19]. CIE subsequently agreed to extend the reporting date to 31 March 1998. This paper provides that report.
2. The Crown's Maori radio policy has developed over a number of years. Today, there are a large number of iwi-based radio stations and other Maori radio services in operation. The bulk of these receive financial support from Te Mangai Paho (\$9.3 million in 1997/98). All Maori radio stations also utilise frequencies reserved by the Crown for the promotion of Maori language and culture.
3. The Crown's primary interest in Maori radio is to promote the Maori language for which it has an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi. In doing so, the Crown wants to ensure that its funds are being used effectively. As well as radio, the Maori language can be promoted through television. A separate paper on this subject is being submitted to the Committee.
4. In the view of officials, present arrangements for Maori radio are basically sound. TMP reports that the majority of Maori radio stations are broadcasting significant levels of Maori language. A number of improvements can be made, however, particularly in terms of coordination among iwi radio stations and "national service" providers, the provision of training of Maori broadcasters, broadcast coverage and the administration of radio licences.
5. It is recommended that a discussion document be developed on the basis of this paper and used to seek the views of Maori before final decisions are taken by Cabinet.

## Policy Context

1. Maori radio was considered at length in the context of the Joint Crown/Maori Working Group on Maori Broadcasting (JWG) which met throughout much of 1996. This work needs to be brought to a conclusion.
2. The Courts have recognised that the Maori language can be promoted effectively through both television and radio and that efforts in these areas are, to some extent, complementary. In considering funding for Maori television, the Government needs to be aware of funding pressures for Maori radio. The complementarity of Maori television and Maori radio has also been implicitly recognised by the national Maori organisations (NMOs) which have identified television, radio and mainstreaming as three legs of the same "policy stool".
3. A further context is the work taking place in relation to Maori language promotion generally. There are a number of sectors across which the Government can commit resources to meet this obligation, e.g. broadcasting, education, home etc, and an overall policy framework is under development, led by the Minister of Maori Affairs.

## Development of Maori Radio

1. The Crown's primary interest in Maori radio is to promote the Maori language for which it has an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi. Broadcasts help to make the Maori language widely accessible to fluent Maori speakers and those learning the language. By its nature, they also have the potential to raise the profile and acceptability of the language among Maori and non-Maori. In meeting this objective, the Crown wants to ensure its funds are being used cost effectively.
2. Maori radio policy has evolved as a result of various findings of the Courts, including the Waitangi Tribunal, and a number of Cabinet decisions dating from 1990. While Maori radio policy has been aimed primarily at promotion of the Maori language, it has also served to give effect to the Government's broadcasting policy generally, e.g. promotion of Maori language and culture as part of New Zealand identity and culture.
3. A national provider, Aotearoa Maori Radio Board, was established by the Government, in consultation with Maori, as part of the BCNZ. This was replaced by the Aotearoa Maori Radio Trust in 1988 when the BCNZ was wound up. AMR's services were subsequently provided in Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Christchurch.
4. In 1990, as a response to the Waitangi Tribunal's recommendations in respect of a claim on the radio spectrum [WAI 26/150], the Government reserved frequencies for the promotion of Maori language and culture to enable full coverage of iwi tribal areas [CAB (90) M 27/26].
5. Iwi-based radio stations were subsequently established in the period 1990-1994 with funding assistance from NZ On Air which included an initial capital grant to each station of \$100,000 to assist with establishment costs, and funding of \$200,000 per annum. AMR's regional services were discontinued in 1994 as local iwi-based services came on stream. Today, AMR provides radio services in the Auckland region only. TMP assumed responsibility for funding all stations in 1995.
6. TMP currently funds 20 iwi-based radio stations, AMR and other "national" Maori radio services, e.g. Ruia Mai and Mana News. A base provision of \$200,000 is provided for each iwi-based radio station. To acquire this, at least 30% of broadcasting between the hours of 6am and 12am must be in the Maori language. To count, Maori language content must be in blocks of ten minutes or more. In addition, a station must have procedures in place to maintain and increase its Maori listening audience. Further provision of up to \$60,000, on average, is available as "incentive funding" for Maori language broadcasts over and above the 30% threshold. Recent monitoring by TMP indicates that most stations are now broadcasting well in excess of this threshold.
7. Licences for the use of the reserved frequencies are granted by the Ministry of Commerce under strict conditions. With the exception of AMR, these are provided to iwi-based organisations who in turn allow the licences to be used by broadcasters chosen by them. In this way, they act as "kaitiaki" or as guardians to ensure that frequencies are used primarily to promote the Maori language. The Ministry currently licences four iwi-based stations which are not funded by TMP. These stations rely exclusively on revenue from advertising and/or their respective iwi/Maori authorities.

## Comment

1. The JWG discussed a number of issues, including national Maori radio services, funding support (in terms of base and incentive funding), and various operational issues such as recruitment, retention and training of skilled staff, and broadcast coverage. Each of these issues is discussed below. The way in which radio licences are administered is also discussed.

## National Radio Services

1. The NMOs in the JWG argued that the establishment of a national Maori radio service should be considered. The JWG noted that "the function of such a service ranged from the provision of an alternative programme for Maori listeners, broadcast independently of iwi stations, through to the provision of supplementary services to iwi stations where it made sense to pool resources in the interests of efficiency and the production of

higher quality programmes." The JWG noted that the most obvious way in which existing services might be supplemented "was in the provision of Maori language programming and national news and current affairs, both of which required highly skilled staff." A number of other programme streams were also identified.

2. To a large extent, the kind of service extension for iwi stations envisaged by the JWG is already being provided through such organisations as Ruia Mai and Mana News.<sup>1</sup>
3. The JWG considered that a national service broadcast independently of iwi stations should be considered. In the view of officials, a more pertinent issue is whether the suitability of the iwi-based network itself is appropriate as the means for giving effect to the Government's Maori radio policy. Given the limited pool of trained Maori broadcasters, and the limited supply of funds for Maori language programming, does it make sense to have 21 iwi/Maori stations doing a job that could be done by one national radio service?
4. From a simple efficiency point of view, the answer is no. In order to create a critical mass of competent Maori radio broadcasters and to take advantage of economies of scale, it would make sense to have one national broadcaster. This would also avoid duplication of resources. For example, while iwi stations (funded by TMP at a cost of approximately \$4.5 million per annum) produce their own programme formats, and while most produce some of their own original programming in Maori, much of the programming broadcast in Maori is produced by organisations such as Ruia Mai and Mana News which are funded separately (at a cost of approximately \$2.2 million per annum).
5. From other points of view, however, the answer is yes. It would be impracticable to attempt to unwind the iwi-based network that has been established at the express wish of iwi. Moreover, as with access radio services, it is desirable that services are provided in a way that are appropriate for local communities. An effective revitalisation strategy for any language requires that it be contextualised within its linguistic community. Linguistic communities for the Maori language are, in the main, iwi-based.
6. TMP intends to increase progressively the threshold of language programming (30%) on which funding for iwi radio stations is based. In order to achieve this, TMP will have no choice but to continue to supplement Maori language programming produced at an iwi level with centrally provided services. There is some scope, however, for locally produced services to be shared more effectively, e.g. through bulletin boards on the Internet.

## Funding

1. In 1997/98, TMP is making \$9.3 million available for the purchase of Maori radio services. Of this, \$4.5 million is being provided to iwi stations for Maori language and cultural programming; \$2.2 million for the purchase of national Maori radio services; \$1.3 million for Maori language outputs in excess of the threshold requirement; \$0.7 million for the "Starnet" (a telecommunications link used to distribute programming to stations); \$0.4 million for coverage extensions; and \$0.2 million for independent programming.
2. The level of base funding provided by TMP (\$200,000) is considered inadequate by most iwi stations. It has not been increased since 1994 and has therefore depreciated in real terms. On the other hand, iwi stations avail themselves of additional incentive funding of \$60,000 per annum, on average. In addition, TMP meets separately the cost of the national services discussed above, their distribution (via the Starnet) and fees payable to the Association of Performers and Recording Artists. These would otherwise cost each station an additional \$60,000, \$30,000 and \$2,000 per annum respectively.
3. It should be noted that there is nothing to prevent iwi/Maori stations seeking funding from sources other than TMP provided contracted levels of Maori language programming are broadcast. These levels are minimum levels. There is therefore nothing to prevent stations broadcasting more Maori language programming if they so wish. In the view of officials, in broadcasting Maori language programming, stations are not closing off commercial opportunities. Most stations derive some revenue from advertising. The extent of such revenue-earning opportunities varies from community to community, depending on the size of the Maori population and the number of Maori speakers in the area.
4. It should also be noted that stations are less vulnerable financially than they were in the early days of their establishment. An important development in this regard has been automation of programme formatting and broadcasting which has allowed staff numbers to be reduced. Automation has also allowed stations to present programming more professionally.
5. For 1997/98 and previous years, TMP's funding has been sourced from a combination of Public Broadcasting Fee (PBF) and Crown revenue. TMP has largely decided how much of its funding will be allocated to radio, and how much to television. From 1998/99, TMP's appropriation will be tied specifically to television. It follows, therefore, that unless the Government wanted to make an additional appropriation for radio, any additional funding for radio will have to be sourced from the PBF (by way of an increase in its absolute value and/or an increase in the percentage applied to Maori broadcasting).

## Recruitment, Retention and Training

1. The operation of iwi stations is modest in comparison with most commercial radio stations. Premises tend to be basic and staff receive relatively low wages, although this varies significantly between urban and rural areas. Some stations rely on voluntary or "work experience" personnel.
2. A survey commissioned by TMP in 1995 indicated that 70% of personnel within the Maori radio industry had five years or less broadcasting experience. The shortage of experienced broadcasters who are fluent in Maori means that most stations find it difficult to produce consistently good quality Maori language programming. Those who acquire the necessary experience and skills tend to be bought out by commercial stations

and the education sector at an early stage.

3. This situation highlights an urgent need for skills training across different sectors to be better coordinated, and for clear goals and objectives relevant to Maori radio broadcasting to be established. At TMP's initiative, representatives from key training organisations and relevant Government agencies recently met to consider this matter. A training-needs analysis is being developed as a first step. In future, it would be appropriate for agencies such as the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with Te Puni Kokiri and TMP, to take more of a lead in this work. This matter is also addressed in a separate report on the review of TMP.

## Broadcast Coverage

1. Although the iwi/Maori station network provides coverage for most rural and urban areas (it is estimated that 80-85% of Maori receive a signal from at least one iwi/Maori radio station), there are some significant coverage deficiencies. These include most of the South Island, with the exception of Christchurch, and various pockets in the North Island, e.g. Wairarapa and south Taranaki.
2. Extension of services into these areas is primarily a funding, not a licensing, issue. A sufficient number of frequencies have been reserved in the South and North Islands to cater for these gaps<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that in the South Island, local iwi have not yet made decisions on how they would like services to be extended.

## Administration of Radio Licences

1. Use of reserved frequencies is subject to a mix of short and long-term licences. Eighteen stations have long-term licences due to expire in the year 2011. The remainder have licences ranging from 3 months to 1 year. It is intended that all stations will eventually be offered long-term licences. This has not yet occurred, however, because of concerns in some instances about the level of Maori language being broadcast by the licence holder and uncertainties about the permanence of the stations.<sup>3</sup>
2. Licence conditions are at present largely subjective in nature, unlike funding contracts administered by TMP, which require specific levels of Maori language to be broadcast. The Ministry of Commerce has not actively monitored compliance with licence conditions, in part because of resourcing constraints and in part because the absence of clearly expressed performance standards would make any subsequent enforcement action difficult.
3. The bulk of iwi stations operate under long term licences and it is not practicable to attempt to renegotiate existing conditions. In the case of stations funded by TMP, this is not an acute problem since the stations have to comply with certain levels of performance in order to secure the funds which they need to operate. The four stations not funded by TMP all operate on the basis of short-term licences, however. As these come up for renewal, it would be appropriate to stipulate what levels of Maori language programming and what reporting arrangements are expected. In the view of officials, it would not be unreasonable to expect such stations to reach progressively at least half the threshold required by TMP for funding support.

## Administration of Funding Contracts

1. In the view of officials, TMP's present administration of funding contracts is adequate. TMP has formal written agreements with all 21 funded stations which are reviewed and renewed annually. The stations are required to submit quarterly reports which include comprehensive financial and qualitative information. TMP monitors stations every six months by recording a set number of hours broadcast by each station and assessing the amount of Maori language broadcast against the contracted requirement. If a station consistently falls below this level, its funding may be reduced or terminated.

## Consultation with Maori

1. It is proposed that a document based on this paper be released for discussion with Maori radio broadcasters and other interested parties at a national hui in Hamilton in July 1998. This would require some travel costs to be met. It would also be appropriate for limited assistance to be provided to the NMOs to enable them to attend the hui and make representations, in line with previous levels of financial support.

## Views of Relevant Agencies

1. This paper reflects the views of Treasury, Commerce and Te Puni Kokiri. DPMC, Crown Law Office and TMP have been consulted.

## Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Committee recommend that Cabinet:

1. note that the Crown's primary interest in Maori radio is to promote the Maori language for which it has an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi;
2. note that Te Mangai Paho reports that the majority of Maori radio stations are broadcasting significant levels of Maori language;
3. note that, in the view of officials, while present arrangements for Maori radio are basically sound, some improvements can be made in the areas of coordination among iwi radio stations and "national service" providers, the provision of training of Maori broadcasters, broadcast coverage and the administration of radio licences;
4. invite the Ministers of Maori Affairs and Communications to release a discussion document based on this report for public comment and consideration at a national hui of Maori radio broadcasters and other interested parties, to be held in Hamilton in July 1998;
5. invite the Ministers of Maori Affairs and Communications to report to the Committee, by 30 September 1998, with recommendations on what steps, if any, need to be taken to improve the provision of Maori radio services, taking into account the views of Maori and other interested parties.

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## Footnotes

1. Ruia Mai produces international and national news, educational programmes and talkback on current affairs, in Maori. Mana News produces national news on Maori issues in Maori and English. TMP has also funded a sportscasting service in Maori, coverage of the Aotearoa Maori Performing Arts Festival and a Maori language music programme. All such services are available to iwi radio stations for broadcast. Mana News is also broadcast on National Radio.
  2. Maori groups in Auckland consider that there is a shortage of FM frequencies reserved in that area. The Ministry of Commerce will be taking these concerns into consideration in its plans to create management rights for the frequencies between 101-108 MHz during 1998.
  3. All licences are issued under section 48(b) of the Radiocommunications Act 1989. The licence stipulates that the frequencies must be used for: the purpose of promoting Maori language and culture and used to broadcast to a primarily Maori audience. Each licence is also subject to an agreement between the Ministry of Commerce and the iwi authority as "rightholder" that: the licence is not to be transferred to any party other than the Secretary of Commerce; programmes are to be directed at a primarily Maori audience; the frequency is to be used to promote Maori language and culture; and the rightholder is to act as a guardian of Maori language and culture through its use of the frequency.
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