

To whom it may concern,

I am happy for my submission to be used in any manner that the commission sees fit however I request that my address be kept anonymised. I am also happy to be contacted for any reason and appreciate the opportunity to provide my perspective as a media consuming New Zealander.

I would like to express my belief that the proposed merging of the activities of NZME and Fairfax NZ Ltd should not go ahead. I agree with the concerns raised in both the commission's own draft determination, the expert report of Dr David Levy and the expert opinion of Gavin Ellis. My concern relates primarily to the plurality of outlets and sources of news and reporting for our nation.

As a proud New Zealander I cherish our democracy and hard won rights as citizens; our right to assemble, vote, speak our mind and access an independent judiciary and publicly held information. But democracy is fragile and I adamantly believe that ongoing access to unbiased news and views, from a variety of outlets, is crucial to cultivating and maintaining our civic responsibility as citizens. To teach our children how our country and the world works we must be informed.

After much consideration I am of the view NZ cannot afford less plurality in news media. As the Levy report points out NZ democracy already contends with a relatively concentrated media-market. Whilst online opinion and news services may help flesh out the range of viewpoints it is becoming apparent that they cannot be relied upon for accuracy, veracity and the prioritising of the public interest as we saw in our last NZ general election and alarmingly this month in the US.

I believe that a lively and competitive media sector plays the dual role of informing the public whilst keeping rival outlets honest. I believe in the self-fulfilling prophecy that if the quality of news diminishes then the public will eventually become less discerning and erudite in the quality and scope of news on offer and thus less informed on key NZ issues; a dynamic wholly unfavourable to a healthy democracy. Also the greater the number of media outlets, the greater choice advertisers will have.

I also believe that a strong publicly funded news broadcasting sector plays a crucial role in the plurality of our news-media but I appreciate that this lies outside the scope of this determination.

Finally It is my belief that if as kiwis we were more fully informed of the implications of media consolidation (and this application) we would be very concerned; most people I meet from every walk of life strongly believes in our democratic institutions but as we're all busy earning a living and raising families not everyone has the education, time or inclination to put their hand up.

Kind regards and thanks,
Regan.

Regan Hawkins