

**From:** Neil Wilson [mailto:reporter@gbweekly.co.nz]  
**Sent:** Friday, 1 July 2016 1:40 p.m.  
**To:** Registrar  
**Subject:** Proposed merger

Kia Ora

I wish to submit against the proposed merger of Fairfax and NZME.

My objection is on the grounds that it would be anti-competitive, especially in the markets served by New Zealand's privately-owned community newspapers.

I am the co-owner of the The Golden Bay Weekly and The Geraldine News. Both are free weeklies which exist only because our advertisers choose to support us. The conglomerate that would result from the proposed merger would have enormous power in the market and would be able to compete unfairly with community papers for advertising. The merged entity would have an alarming amount of clout over the agencies whose employees make crucial decisions about where advertising is placed and how clients' budgets are applied. Community papers are read by more people than those who read dailies or Sundays, according to Nielsen figures. Anything that threatens the existence of the community papers is a very bad thing for the communities they serve.

The possible impact on the integrity of news-gathering and news presentation might be even more catastrophic. Nationwide radio and print news would be totally dominated by the monopoly, reducing the amount of scrutiny and debate. The very existence of the small hyper-local community papers would be threatened by the dominance of the merged entities and the demands of their shareholders.

If the parties were prevented from merging I believe there would be more sales of provincial papers like the Wairarapa Times-Age which has recently been purchased by its editor and thereby returned to community ownership. If Fairfax and NZME claim they cannot operate profitably in the newspaper business they should pursue more sales like the one in Masterton. Local newspapers would then continue to evolve in a healthy direction rather than the totally unhealthy one they have had imposed on them recently by their big corporate owners. Daily papers owned by locals in Timaru, Nelson, New Plymouth, Invercargill and so on would continue to serve their readers and attract advertisers' loyalty. They may even revive the NZPA or something similar.

The principals of NZME and Fairfax have demonstrated their lack of commitment to newspapers in a number of ways. Allowing them to monopolise the media scene in the way they would after a merger is wrong. It is also anti-democratic.

Regards

Neil Wilson

*Neil Wilson*  
*The GB Weekly and The Geraldine News*