

MEDIA RELEASE



AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD)

MEDIA IN 2021: NEW PUBLIC FUNDING AS PLATFORM DEALS EMERGE

The 2021 *Aotearoa New Zealand Media Ownership Report* by the AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD) observes the introduction of a government-supported *Public Interest Journalism Fund*. From \$55 million, new journalism positions, projects and training programmes were established across the media sector. The funding gave cause for optimism, but it was unclear how permanent these initiatives would be.

After the initial *Public Interest Journalism Fund* rollouts, Facebook (renamed Meta) launched a programme for domestic news outlets to build audience and reader revenue. Notably, however, Facebook/Meta and Google take content from outside news outlets without compensation. Consequently, the News Publishers Association (NPA) asked the Commerce Commission to grant New Zealand news publishers the power to negotiate for payments with social media corporations. Behind the scenes, a number of news media organisations are starting negotiations with Google.

- What Meta launched in New Zealand is underwhelming when compared internationally. Google has already negotiated deals with some New Zealand publishers. So, we are seeing interesting cracks opening between social media companies and media outlets, says JMAD Co-Director Merja Myllylahti.

In 2021, the New Zealand market lost one independently owned media outlet—BusinessDesk. It was acquired by NZME—a major news publisher and half owner of the country's entire commercial radio sector. The government-proposed merger of TVNZ and RNZ into one public media entity was pushed out to 2022. During 2021, AT&T WarnerMedia merged with Discovery, which had purchased MediaWorks' television holdings in 2020. Discovery announced plans to bring new channels to the national television market in 2022.

- Against the commercial priorities of social media and transnational media corporates, the principles of public interest journalism have no institutional or legislative guarantee, says JMAD Co-Director Wayne Hope.

Key trends and events in the New Zealand media:

- Independently owned BusinessDesk sold to NZME
- TVNZ and RNZ merger decision delayed until 2022
- Discovery expands and launches new channels in NZ
- News publishers launch action against Google and Facebook

Several AUT academics from the School of Communications Studies contributed to the 2021 JMAD Report, drawing on expertise in their fields. The report was edited by Professor Wayne Hope and co-ordinated by Dr Saing Te, and they also contributed to the report. Other contributors included Dr Sarah Baker, Dr Peter Hoar, Dr Rufus McEwan, Dr Atakohu Middleton, and Dr Greg Treadwell.

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About:

JMAD is AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy, and its reports are publicly available at AUT online: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/study-at-aut/study-areas/communications/research/journalism,-media-and-democracy-research-centre/journalists-and-projects/new-zealand-media-ownership-report>

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