

Research into New Zealand's independent documentary sector

Commissioned by Creative New Zealand
and the New Zealand Film Commission

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Foreword

Tēnā koutou

As long-standing partners of the Screen Innovation Production Fund, Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission value the significant role that documentary filmmakers and their work play in this country. That is why we commissioned research into the state of the independent documentary sector in September 2007.

The research has two objectives. Firstly, we wanted to identify and analyse barriers and opportunities affecting documentary makers in this country. We also wanted the findings to help us determine the future roles of both our organisations in documentary filmmaking in New Zealand.

A key trigger prompting this research is the increasingly competitive nature of the Screen Innovation Production Fund, where approximately only one in every six funding applications is supported in each funding round.

As a consequence Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission have considered how projects are funded through the Screen Innovation Production Fund. Changes to the criteria will be announced in November 2008 to be launched in June 2009 funding round.

New Zealand Film Commission will launch a guide to “How to Market Your Documentary” on the NZFC website in August 2008.

Along with the barriers, this research identifies a range of opportunities and possibilities. We hope it will spark informed discussion among documentary makers, industry organisations, exhibitors and distributors, funders and broadcasters, providing a useful stepping stone towards meeting the challenges that the sector faces.

Kia hora te mārino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, kia tere te kārohirohi i mua i tō huarahi.

Stephen Wainwright
Chief Executive
Creative New Zealand
March 2008

Ruth Harley
Chief Executive
New Zealand Film Commission

1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

- Concerns have been expressed by New Zealand documentary makers about a perceived lack of opportunity for them to practise their craft. Commissioned by the New Zealand Film Commission and Creative New Zealand, this research surveyed the views of documentary makers, industry organisations, broadcasters and distributors/exhibitors.
- As well as identifying current barriers and opportunities, this report presents the views of documentary makers on ways to support the career paths of those in the sector and enhance documentary making opportunities in New Zealand.

1.2 Context

- New Zealand broadcasting was deregulated in 1989. Since then, four government funding agencies (NZ On Air, Te Māngai Pāho, the New Zealand Film Commission and Creative New Zealand) have supported documentaries to differing degrees and according to their legislative mandates.
- Formerly a public service broadcaster but still reliant on commercial revenue, TVNZ was transformed into a State Owned Enterprise in 1989 and required to return a dividend to the government.
- The government set up NZ On Air in 1989 to “reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture”. This included fostering and funding drama and documentary, and ensuring the production of New Zealand programmes that would not otherwise be made in a commercial market.
- Every year, NZ On Air funds more than 100 hours of documentary programming, investing on average approximately \$9 million a year.
- Overall government funding for television has increased 162 per cent since 2000/01. In 2003, TVNZ became a Crown Owned Company with a charter, requiring it to balance commercial return with public broadcasting objectives. In 2004, the Māori Television Service was established to play a significant role in the revitalisation of Māori language and culture.
- During the 1990s, the number of documentary makers grew, many of them sole operators or small companies who responded to the call for more one-off

documentaries. It could be argued there are now too many documentary makers competing in a small market with a finite public subsidy.

- The New Zealand Film Commission has funded a number of documentaries for theatrical release since the early 1980s. In partnership with Creative New Zealand, it also supports low-budget, innovative and experimental moving-image projects through the Screen Innovation Production Fund.
- Despite new media opportunities, New Zealand television is still the primary market for documentaries that tell local stories and deal with local issues. However, television has specific documentary content requirements and neither NZ On Air nor Te Māngai Pāho will support a project without a broadcaster commitment to screen it.
- In addition to government policy changes, new television channels have emerged and theatrical opportunities have expanded.
- The growing need to meet multi-platform delivery requirements, including online possibilities, is a new challenge for documentary makers. However, the potential for new revenue streams is still uncertain.

1.3 Defining the term “documentary”

- This research used guidelines compiled by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to define the term “documentary”. ACMA defines a documentary as “a programme that is a creative treatment of actuality other than a news, current affairs, sports coverage, magazine, infotainment or light entertainment programme”.
- In its discussion, ACMA acknowledges the many different types of definition and the difficulty of precise characterisation.
- In the annual *New Zealand Television Local Content Report*, compiled by NZ On Air, documentaries are defined as generally comprising “one-off documentaries or series in a non-magazine format”. This can range from “blue chip” programmes to weekly observational series such as the daily activities in workplaces such as a zoo, hospital or immigration service.
- In any analysis of this qualitative research, it is important to be aware that those interviewed – whether documentary makers, industry organisations, broadcasters or distributors/exhibitors – may have different interpretations and definitions of what “documentaries” are.

1.4 The barriers

New Zealand has a small population and there are many producers competing in a small market. Along with the size of the local market, documentary makers interviewed saw a number of other challenges. These included:

- NZ On Air’s legislative remit “to reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture”
- limited opportunities for television content
- concern that the commissioning process appears to favour bigger companies and series over one-offs
- gaps in professional development opportunities
- limited access to NZFC funding mechanisms
- high archival footage costs at The Film Archive and Archives New Zealand
- the difficulty of sustaining a business due to dependence on government subsidy and the high number of practitioners, compared to the size of the industry.

1.5 The opportunities

Documentary makers acknowledge a number of opportunities available to them, including:

- government recognition of the value of documentary and its continuing support
- professional development opportunities
- significant audiences outside mainstream television for documentaries: e.g. film festivals, pay television, arthouse and regional cinemas
- NZFC support for post-production if a documentary is accepted for a major festival
- international pitching forums to access overseas investment, and international markets for sales
- Māori Television’s flexibility in allowing documentary makers to enjoy a level of creative freedom
- DVDs, multi-platform delivery, online possibilities
- the Screen Innovation Production Fund, which fulfils an important function in the sector by encouraging innovation and experimentation in moving-image projects, including documentary.

Since this research was conducted, NZ On Air has announced a new recoupment policy that benefits producers. NZ On Air will not retain any back-end equity position for one-off programmes, including documentary, made for less than \$200,000.

1.5 A way forward

Documentary makers taking part in this research offered a number of solutions to filling some of the gaps (e.g. fostering the long-term careers of documentary makers) that they see in the sector. Their suggestions include:

- NZ On Air may wish to consider looking beyond mainstream television to include commissions from pay television and a cluster of smaller channels; funding for programmes that go directly online; and increasing its allocation to Māori Television.
- A specific documentary fund with contributions from funding partners would help to boost areas where there are gaps: low-cost and community projects; feature documentaries; the development and pitching of ideas with international partnership or investment potential.
- A documentary fellowship for exceptional documentary makers would provide financial support for experienced documentary makers to practise their skills over a sustained period of time. This could be coupled with mentoring/learning opportunities, helping to address criticism of the poor writing and story structure capabilities of emerging documentary makers.
- Strong, well-crafted documentaries of significant social and cultural value have a long life through DVD sales, educational resource material, repeat screenings on satellite and smaller channels, and international sales. Education authorities, in particular, could be encouraged to take advantage of the wealth of material generated by New Zealand's best documentary makers and establish a process for institutions to access the material.
- Online opportunities cannot be ignored. Internationally, there is an emerging trend for filmmakers to go straight to the web for distribution (in the UK, cinema admissions have declined for the second year in a row). The need to reformat material to meet multi-platform requirements is rapidly becoming an essential part of the documentary maker's business.

1.6 A final word

- This qualitative research aimed to provide a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities for documentary making in New Zealand.¹
- International models can inform discussions about the challenges faced in the documentary sector but solutions have to be uniquely tailored to a small country.

¹ This report encapsulates the views of the documentary sector. These views are not necessarily those of Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission.

- Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission hope that this report will spark informed discussion among documentary makers, industry organisations, exhibitors and distributors, funders and broadcasters about ways to meet the challenges facing the documentary sector.

2. Introduction

The Screen Innovation Production Fund (SIPF) was established in 1996. It is a partnership between Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission, and is administered through Creative New Zealand. The New Zealand Film Commission contributes \$350,000 of the annual \$600,000 Fund.

The purpose of the SIPF, stated in Creative New Zealand's *Funding Guide: Ngā Pūtea 2007–2008*, is “to provide grants to emerging and experienced moving-image makers for innovative and experimental moving-image productions”.

The SIPF receives approximately 200 funding applications a year. Of these, an average of 35 to 40 projects are offered funding. Grants are capped at \$25,000, with the average grant between \$12,000 and \$15,000. Genres range from animation, dance, experimental installations and digital film features, to short films and documentaries.

These final two categories – short films and documentaries – consistently represent the highest number of funding requests received. Over the past three or four years, the SIPF partners have noted several trends.

- The number of documentary funding proposals has been increasing steadily, adding significant pressure to an already highly competitive fund.
- There has been a marked increase in the number of established documentary filmmakers with proven track records applying to the SIPF.
- Documentary projects considered more suitable for mainstream/commercial television are being submitted to the SIPF.

Appendix 5 provides additional information on the SIPF's support for documentaries and a list of the documentary projects that have received SIPF funding from 2001/02 to 2006/07.

2.1 Research objectives

- (a) To produce a research report that will enable Creative New Zealand the New Zealand Film Commission to determine their future roles in relationship to documentary filmmaking in New Zealand.
- (b) To understand the barriers and opportunities affecting the independent documentary sector.

2.2 Methodology

The study extracted material from a number of sources and employed a range of methods. *Appendix 1* contains a list of all those interviewed for this research.

(a) **Industry-wide seminars**

Women in Film and Television (WIFT) organised three industry-wide seminars for documentary filmmakers to talk about their experiences and perspectives on the barriers and opportunities. The one-day seminars were attended by 130 documentary filmmakers (60 in Auckland, 50 in Wellington, 20 in Dunedin) in March 2007. The discussions were noted in full and comments were collated around the major themes of obstacles and solutions.

(b) **In-depth interviews with documentary filmmakers**

Qualitative interviews were conducted in person, by phone or email with 34 documentary filmmakers from March to July 2007. Participants were selected based on achieving an industry mix. For example:

- spread of experience
- age
- size of production company/business
- type of funding received
- geographical spread.

Recipients of SIPF grants were well-represented (12 out of 34 interviewees) in order to assess the effect of SIPF support.

(c) **In-depth interviews with industry representatives**

Qualitative interviews were conducted in person or by phone with representatives of organisations in the documentary filmmaking sector:

- commissioning editors of free-to-air television networks
- digital and pay television services
- exhibitors/distributors
- film festival organisers
- industry organisations
- funding bodies.

(d) **Secondary reports**

(i) New Zealand research reports and industry surveys provided useful information relevant to the study. They included:

- papers commissioned for the 2003 NZ On Air Documentary Symposium
- Statistics New Zealand's Screen Industry Survey

- New Zealand Screen Council data on NZ On Air funding allocations
- minutes of the SIPF partner meetings, 2001–2007
- television *Local Content Reports*, 2003–2006.

(ii) International material to inform this research included Australian Film Commission reports on documentary key data, production and funding in Australia; and funding models from other agencies, specifically Film Finance Corporation Australia, Telefilm Canada and the Irish Film Board.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

This research involved wide consultation with documentary makers, as well as interviews with industry representatives (see *Appendix 1*). In outlining the current barriers and opportunities for the documentary sector in New Zealand, this report highlights the views of documentary makers. The perspectives of television networks on commissioning and programming is presented in Section 10. The mandates of documentary funders are presented in *Appendix 3*.

It is also important to be aware that those interviewed – whether documentary makers, industry organisations, broadcasters or distributors/exhibitors – may have different interpretations and definitions of the term “documentaries”, as well as different understandings of how broadcasters and funding agencies operate.

3. Context

In 1964, New Zealand’s first domestic television documentary series, *Islands of the Gulf*, was screened. The producer, Shirley Maddock, made the series about the Hauraki Gulf because “it was time we reflected our landscape, our culture, our people”. Those cultural drivers continue to provide the rationale for government intervention in screen production.

Broadcasting was deregulated 25 years later. Along with other government-owned entities, TVNZ was transformed into a State Owned Enterprise required to return a dividend to the government. Private television broadcasting was encouraged to create a competitive environment and TV3 was launched in 1989.

In this new deregulated environment, the government acknowledged that intervention was necessary to protect the social and cultural objectives of broadcasting. In 1989, the government agency NZ On Air was established. Its primary functions were to “reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture” – including fostering drama and documentary, two genres thought to be vulnerable. The intervention was intended to

address market failure by ensuring the production of New Zealand programmes that would not otherwise be made in a commercial market.

Since 1999, the government has attempted to further redress the balance by introducing measures to strengthen the role of public service broadcasting. Notably:

- In 2003, TVNZ became a Crown Owned Company with a charter, requiring it to balance commercial return with public broadcasting objectives.
- In 2004, the Māori Television Service was established to play a significant role in the revitalisation of Māori language and culture.

Appendix 2 contains a timeline of the independent documentary sector from 1964–2006, showing developments in the sector.

Total government budgeted funding for television content in 2007/08 is \$166,887,000, allocated to several agencies. This compares with \$63,713,000 in 2000/01, an increase of 162 per cent.

Appendix 4 contains more information on government funding of New Zealand television and film content.

NZ On Air support

Every year, NZ On Air funds more than 100 hours of documentary programming, investing on average approximately \$9 million a year. These are a mix of high-cost series (e.g. *Captain Cook*, *The New Zealand Wars*); special interest (e.g. Festival documentaries, *Artsville*); prime-time series (e.g. *Country Calendar* and *Here To Stay*); strands such as *Inside New Zealand* and *Pakipumeka Aotearoa*; and information series (e.g. *Wa\$ted*, *Money Man*).

Appendix 4 includes statistics (hours and money) for NZ On Air documentary funding over the 10 years from 1997/98 to 2006/07.

For many years, documentaries funded by NZ On Air and commissioned by television networks have screened in prime time. The process of selecting one-off documentaries for funding (a committee made up of NZ On Air and television network representatives) provides constructive tension for decision-making. The push and pull of competing priorities is intended to result in the production of a range of documentaries that, cumulatively, met the cultural objectives of the funder and the more commercial objectives of the broadcaster. Proposals for documentary series are presented to the full NZ On Air board.

During the 1990s the number of documentary makers grew, many of them sole operators or small companies who responded to the call for one-off documentaries. Many expected to be supported and sustained largely by government funding. It could be argued there are now too many documentary makers trying to operate in an environment constrained by finite public subsidy and the changing requirements of broadcasters.

Furthermore, documentaries made with public money are by definition parochial in content, making it more difficult to secure international production finance or on-sell programmes on the international market.

However, this is not always the case as some documentary makers can craft unique New Zealand stories that have international appeal. NZ On Air’s new recoupment regime favouring producers may also go some way towards addressing the problems of sustaining viable production businesses.

New Zealand Film Commission support

The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) has financed a small number of documentaries for theatrical release since the early 1980s (see *Appendix 4*). Two examples are *Patu*, produced by Merata Mita to explore civil unrest during the 1981 Springbok tour, and the internationally successful *Punitive Damage* (Gaylene Preston/Annie Goldson), also funded by NZ On Air, about the murder of a young New Zealander during a 1991 massacre by Indonesian military in East Timor.

Some of New Zealand’s most prominent feature filmmakers have made NZFC documentaries, often combined with NZ On Air funding: Gaylene Preston, Vincent Ward, Geoff Murphy, Barry Barclay.

Low-cost, non-broadcast documentaries have been supported since 1984 through a partnership between Creative New Zealand and the NZFC. The Creative Film and Video Fund, and now the Screen Innovation Production Fund, have allocated grants to “exceptional, innovative, non-commercial projects”. Despite their very small budgets, the more successful of the SIPF-funded documentaries have screened in film festivals, won awards, had significant political impact, sold DVDs and been used as educational resources. The SIPF’s emphasis on innovation has freed documentary makers to pursue their own distinct story and voice and has provided a launching pad for new talent.

Television the primary market

New Zealand television is the primary market for documentaries that tell local stories and deal with local issues. The volume is relatively substantial by international standards.

First-run documentary hours: by channel, 2003–2006

	TV One	TV2	TV3	Māori Television	Total
Jan-Dec 03	116	45	30		191
Jan-Dec 04	147	56	24		227
Jan-Dec 05	197	62	45		304
Jan-Dec 06	141	110	30	93	374

Source: Local Content Reports 2003–2006

However, there are specific documentary content requirements for television and neither NZ On Air nor the Māori broadcasting funding agency, Te Māngai Pāho, will support a project without a broadcaster commitment to screen it.

Documentary makers interviewed for this research felt that commercial strategies at TVNZ to maximise audiences favour programme series or clusters grouped around a theme, at the expense of one-off documentaries. They felt that series tended towards the popular factual end of documentary and were more likely to be made by the larger production companies with the capacity and infrastructure to deal with large projects. This reduced opportunities for documentary makers with a singular project.

Māori Television favours one-off documentaries but the obligations to Māori language and culture impose limitations for many producers.

At its peak in the late 1990s, New Zealand television offered its audiences up to 60 New Zealand-made documentaries a year. More recent trends towards series or multi-part documentary have reduced opportunities for one-off documentary makers.

Women in Film and Television seminars

Concern about the present state of documentary production in New Zealand was expressed at three nationwide seminars held by Women in Film and Television in March 2007. The summary report, used for this research, described the documentary as “a thriving but troubled genre”. This is at a time when a small number of high profile documentaries have broken into general release in cinemas around the world and have significant audience-pulling power. Once the preserve of arthouse cinemas and film festivals, recent documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *March of the Penguins* and *Super Size Me* have become major money-earners, especially against their relatively low production costs.

In this country, the New Zealand International Film Festival gives documentaries plenty of screen time (50 in 2005, 54 in 2006 and 53 in 2007), including a number of local productions. Several of them return on general release in cinemas. The DOCNZ Festival Trust organised its first International Documentary Film Festival in 2005 to showcase high-profile documentaries and give an opportunity for emerging filmmakers to show their work.

A changing environment

Broadcasting deregulation in 1989 gave rise to a pool of independent documentary makers whose work has played an important role in New Zealand’s culture. Since then, four government funding agencies (NZ On Air, Te Māngai Pāho, the New Zealand Film Commission and Creative New Zealand) have supported documentaries to differing degrees and according to their legislative mandates. A range of policies and strategies have been established and tried out, some with funding contributions from broadcasters, some later disbanded.

In addition to government policy changes, new television channels have emerged and theatrical opportunities have expanded. With fragmenting television audiences, the networks have become increasingly competitive and many documentary makers believe that this has guided their programming requirements.

The growing need to meet multi-platform delivery requirements, including online possibilities, is a new challenge for documentary makers. However, the potential for new revenue streams is still uncertain.

4. How this research defines documentary

Guidelines compiled by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) define a documentary as “a programme that is a creative treatment of actuality other than a news, current affairs, sports coverage, magazine, infotainment or light entertainment programme”.

This research uses the ACMA definition.

ACMA recognises that documentary and the other programme types listed in this definition are on a continuum “with movement over time as new styles of programmes emerge and others lose popularity”. In its discussion, ACMA acknowledges the many types of documentary and the difficulty of precise characterisation. It says there is a blurring of boundaries with docu-drama, docu-comedy or documentaries that incorporate some re-enactment or other constructed element.

The main distinction to emerge from interviews conducted for this research is between unscripted social or essay documentary in the “auteur” style and scripted formats that are closer to reality television, popular factual or magazine programming. Feature-length, artistic or personal documentaries were perceived as produced primarily for film festival release or a “festival” slot on television. One-offs or series, especially those geared to meeting audience preferences, were identified as the domain of mainstream television.

There was widespread agreement on the factual nature of the genre but views varied on the styles and representation of fact or reality.

“Documentary is the creative treatment of reality – films that inspire, provoke and capture the essence of life using unconstructed, unmanipulated reality as its subject.”

“I come away from a documentary knowing something I didn’t before I went, apart from being entertained. It piques my curiosity or amplifies my knowledge.”

“A documentary tells the story from someone’s point of view and contains their truth. It can be historical, observational, human interest.”

One documentary filmmaker summed up the problem of being too prescriptive.

“Documentary is almost impossible to define because I could probably find a great example to contradict any definition I could give. My best try would be factual storytelling. I really want to add that a true documentary is a one-off, not a series. There are, of course, exceptions to that but generally I think if it becomes a series, it becomes a formula and ceases to be a story.”

One commissioner said that distinctions do not matter because audiences do not differentiate between documentary, popular factual programmes and current affairs.

“I’m not a purist. Documentaries shouldn’t be on a pedestal. They are about getting to the hearts and minds of audiences, whether through a constructed human experiment or an observational documentary. What we need is variation in our one-hour one-offs.”

The definition of documentary used in the annual *New Zealand Television Local Content Report* is broad, ranging from “blue chip” programmes to weekly observational series such as the daily activities in workplaces such as a zoo, hospital or immigration service. In NZ On Air’s annual *Public Information and Opinion Monitor*, which gauges audience attitudes to programmes funded by NZ On Air, New Zealand documentaries are reported as the most frequently watched programmes in households.

In any analysis of this qualitative research, it is important to be aware that those interviewed – whether documentary makers, industry organisations, broadcasters or distributors/exhibitors – may have different interpretations and definitions of what “documentaries” are.

5. Roles of the New Zealand documentary

Government funding to the documentary sector recognises the benefits of cultural, social, local content, audience and industry outcomes. The specific promotion of documentary production in NZ On Air’s legislation reflects the value placed on the genre. Its prevalence in Te Māngai Pāho funding and inclusion in Creative New Zealand and New Zealand Film Commission policies or programmes are further evidence that the documentary has recognised roles in New Zealand life.

In addition, the networks fund and screen New Zealand documentaries on prime-time television.

In the course of this research, documentary makers expressed their appreciation of the continued funding support and saw it as necessary to their survival.

5.1 Cultural

The genre plays a significant role in ensuring New Zealand stories are told by, about and for New Zealanders. Funding regimes in comparable countries show that government intervention is seen as appropriate and necessary to ensure the continuation of cultural production. The mandates of New Zealand funding agencies (*Appendix 2*) recognise that subsidy should be applied to non-commercial programmes.

5.2 Civil society

Documentaries track New Zealand's social development. They play an important part in preserving our history and commenting on our present. They are also a key part of the democratic process, promoting new information, exposing viewers to new ideas and encouraging debate.

5.3 Local content

The popularity of local documentaries has ensured a steady stream of commissions. Cultural and civil society objectives are met by presenting a range of subject matter and styles.

5.4 Professional development

Documentaries are a key area for creative talent to use their skills in shaping stories, structuring complex arguments and applying the most effective production techniques. While new talent is fostered, sustaining established documentary makers means that their creative experience enriches the sector and provides a return on investment.

5.5 Industry development

The documentary sector provides substantial work and on-the-job training for technical personnel (camera, sound, post-production). A healthy talent pool of New Zealand practitioners are maintained through a secure production base, and the scope to practise and extend their craft.

Some documentary makers suggested that the local content role is overriding the cultural, civil society and professional development roles of documentary.

6. Snapshot of documentary companies

6.1 Overview

The 2006 Statistics New Zealand Screen Industry Survey reveals an industry characterised by a large number of freelancers and contractors working both independently and with larger production and broadcasting companies. Of more than 2,000 active companies, nine out of ten are in the businesses of production and post-

production. In 2006, they increased their overall gross revenue from television programmes by 5.7 per cent to \$302 million, compared with 2005.

Documentary makers interviewed for this research felt that mainstream television opportunities for sole documentary makers or small businesses have shrunk because they are increasingly competing against larger companies able to react more effectively to the changing demands of the market.

6.2 Divisions between small and large companies

Paul Norris, head of the New Zealand Broadcasting School at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), undertook an analysis of the 44 companies that received NZ On Air funding for documentaries in the years 2004 to 2006.

In his analysis, he defined the term “documentaries” according to NZ On Air’s funding decisions and data collection for the *Local Content Survey*. He says the definition was “very broad, embracing strands such as *Inside New Zealand*, series such as *Frontier of Dreams*, one-offs, and even observational reality or magazine programmes”.

His analysis shows that:

- most companies were funded for less than 10 hours over the three years
- 25 companies received funding for one hour over the three years
- seven companies were funded for more than 10 hours
- the largest amount of funding was for 26.5 hours.

Norris says the analysis reveals a hierarchy of companies that can make the system work for them while the others exist on a handful of commissions. Just five or six companies account for most of the documentary production for television.

The analysis supports findings from the WIFT documentary seminars and the qualitative interviews undertaken for this research that there are two documentary streams: one serves the commercial interests of television network programmers and the other has to seek screening opportunities elsewhere.

One of the more successful companies suggested to Norris that those who complained about the current environment had failed to adjust to a changed climate and the needs of the market for more populist programme styles. However, one of the small producers defended its role and the contribution it makes to the culture of documentary making in New Zealand.

Some companies have given up. For one small producer, documentaries provided all of its income for 15 years. By 2007, they provided less than 10 per cent. One company, which received the most funding for documentaries over 2004–2006, is now making very few because there is not sufficient profit from the genre.

Some talented, experienced documentary makers are also giving up because of limited funding, opportunities and markets.

7. Independent documentary makers: the barriers

7.1 Perceptions of the current television environment

7.1.1 DECLINE IN CHALLENGING DOCUMENTARIES ON THE TELEVISION NETWORKS

A common view expressed by documentary makers interviewed for this research was that much of what New Zealand networks call “documentary” would not be accepted as that internationally. Some attributed the perceived “decline” in challenging documentaries to the emergence of celebrity profiles in the mid-1990s and the rise of popular factual entertainment programmes. They acknowledged the commercial responsibility of television networks to constantly re-evaluate programming to meet audience targets. However, for many documentary makers this role conflicted with their belief in the intrinsic creative value of their work and its right to be screened, over and above audience preferences.

Agreed points emerged from discussions and interviews with independent documentary makers:

- The lack of exposure to diverse styles of documentaries has implications for skill levels of new documentary makers learning how to tell an important or complex story.
- The commercial imperatives of broadcasting mean that non-commercial documentary makers seldom receive television commissions.
- The expertise and insight of experienced documentary makers could be used more.
- NZ On Air’s funding depends on the requirements of the networks and what they agree to screen.

“I’ve felt there’s no future for me. Look at Gaylene Preston, Alister Barry and Costa Botes. They produce documentaries of cultural value but they’re still struggling after all this time. You still need the funding to keep going.”

“There are two streams of documentary programming and they don’t cross over. Our [large company] world of network-focused factual programming doesn’t do what the single-voiced auteur wants. The priorities are different.”

“The natural domain for documentary makers is television. In most civilised countries intelligent, provocative documentaries are shown on the public service broadcasting channels.”

7.1.2 THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

Many of those interviewed believed that the commercial environment for commissioning documentaries, which they felt favoured series over one-offs, advantages big production houses over small independents. Small companies or sole operators seldom have the business infrastructure to pitch series.

Some felt that although small independents often produced some of the best, most creative work, television audiences were not given the opportunity to see it. They also felt there was a predictability of style, range and forms of storytelling from producers currently receiving commissions.

“I’m desperately trying to come up with an artificial construct for my documentary to lay over the information to make it palatable for commissioners.”

“There are a lot of great documentaries being made but almost none of them are given the opportunity to be seen outside a few film festival screenings.”

“The best work from the small independents is what wins awards here and overseas. We need the courage of our convictions. Filmmakers are an incredible, exportable product to sell New Zealand.”

Some documentary makers, many with proven track records, said they feel left out of the mainstream commissioning process. While they recognised the importance of adapting to changing needs, and that not doing so could hinder success, they felt that as experienced practitioners, they had earned the right to be listened to.

Māori Television was seen as a welcome addition to the broadcasting sector.

7.2 Funding structures

Documentary makers identified several funding inhibitors. These were:

- content parameters
- professional development gaps
- scarcity of project development funding.

7.2.1 CONTENT

Many documentary makers felt constrained in the scope of subject matter they could explore because television funding criteria limited them to specific New Zealand content. Several had projects they wanted to develop in the Pacific, arguing that the region is a natural extension of interest for New Zealanders. Pacific stories, they felt, are less likely to be told if we don’t tell them.

Others say outdated criteria are inhibiting the innovation made possible through new developments in technology.

Documentary makers suggested it was time to revisit NZ On Air's legislation and the interpretation of its function to "reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture" by "promoting programmes about New Zealand and New Zealand interests".

They also made the following points:

- Funders could consider taking a broader view of what constitutes a New Zealand story: e.g. it has a New Zealand producer, director and/or crew.
- The necessity for a New Zealand angle, one that is relevant to a New Zealand audience, can impose an artificial construct on a story.
- The earmarking of funding for specific types of projects can disadvantage a unique proposal that does not fit the criteria.

"We couldn't make a documentary on how Chinese are buying votes in the Pacific without a New Zealand way into it."

"The very language of documentary is going through an intense evolutionary burst right now. We hardly have terms for it. This is thanks, in great part but not exclusively, to the new technologies, the ability to shift large amounts of digital data rapidly."

7.2.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GAPS

Like other artists, documentary makers need opportunities to build and develop their talent but many of those interviewed felt they were not nurtured in the same way as dramatic filmmakers. They felt left out of the New Zealand Film Commission structure, which offers a developmental pathway for feature filmmakers, starting with the Short Film POD scheme.

Documentary makers, they said, can build up storytelling and production skills comparable to dramatic short filmmakers.

The focus of the Screen Innovation Production Fund is experimental or innovative works. Documentary makers interviewed say there is little funding available for documentaries that bridge the gap between low-cost innovative works and commercial television projects.

"Screen Innovation can only be thought of in a certain way – for pushing the boundaries."

"The NZ Film Commission won't give you a chance unless you have a distributor prepared to distribute your film to a cinema. That's hard to get for a documentary. So there's a hole."

“I’ve been making documentaries for ten years but there are no longer the opportunities to make well-researched, high-end productions. I’ve gone to the SIPF as my last resort on a project. We’ve managed to persuade the crew and director to work for nothing but I can’t persuade the editor because they work for a chunk of time. If I do get some funding it’ll only be for a third their rate anyway.”

7.2.3 DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

Some documentary filmmakers felt that the level of investment needed to go through the research and commissioning process was almost impossible for small independents unless they had financial backing: e.g. a partner or another source of income. Grant acquittal reports received by Creative New Zealand between 2001 and 2007 show that SIPF grant recipients typically spent between one to three years making their documentaries and relied on the free labour of other crew to help them complete it.

Appendix 5

Documentary makers also made the following points:

- More funding for research and development is required for preparing promos to seek other sources of investment, and to pitch proposals to potential international investors.
- Some documentary makers take the initiative in seeking out alternative funding support but many depend solely on traditional avenues.
- Private sponsors are scarce and there is not a range of non-profit organisations that might fund documentary research (as in the United States).
- SIPF grants are not intended to sustain experienced documentary makers.
- Production funding is relatively low compared to other comparable countries.
- Greater incentives could be provided in the current funding models: for example, to explore relationships with NGOs to access additional investment.

“Seed money of around \$20,000 is needed for research. It gets you out the door and allows you to pitch to international companies.”

“I made a feature-length documentary that was in the New Zealand Film Festival and on TVNZ. I was able to develop it and let the story take shape with an historical research grant from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.”

7.3 Archive footage costs

Documentary makers interviewed saw The Film Archive as an excellent resource and a “national treasure”. However, their licence fees, even for public domain footage, are seen as prohibitive for low-budget filmmaking. Even producers with larger budgets say they charge like a stock-footage library and need to be better resourced. TVNZ Archives was praised for its service, willingness to negotiate rates and consistency.

Documentary makers would like Archives New Zealand, which holds masters from the National Film Unit, to be more responsive to the needs of production and make its material available in the public domain. They said that much of the material in public archives was publicly funded and that there should be flexibility around the rates charged for any New Zealand archival material that contributes to a publicly funded documentary.

“All my projects involve archive footage. Calculating royalties or licence fees at global rates because we are ‘in a global economy’ is a profound tragedy for our culture and heritage.”

“I have a lot of sympathy for TVNZ Archives because they have continued to maintain their BBC style mission through the dark days of the ’80s and ’90s and on into the 2000s. They have also given me deals which I regard as not too unreasonable.”

7.4 Sustainability

Working as a documentary maker in New Zealand and elsewhere in the world can be unsustainable unless you’re part of a large production house with a range of activities. Even then, say documentary makers, factual and documentary television production is increasingly competitive as more companies fight for the work.

A company commissioned to make a reasonably long-running series is in a better position to accommodate the occasional one-off showcase documentary as a “labour of love”: i.e. the cost of higher production values can be offset against money the company makes from more commercial projects.

Documentary makers also made the following points:

- Dedicated documentary makers need another income strand to sustain their business: e.g. as a “for hire” camera operator or director.
- The market for traditional documentaries made by a sole practitioner is shrinking.
- Large commercial production companies are positioned financially and philosophically to react quickly to the supply demands of mainstream television.
- Fast turnaround work and adaptability is the only way a small independent can sustain itself.
- The current funding and commissioning models do not appear to be working for some of New Zealand’s most experienced documentary makers. The sector needs to look for ways to sustain these documentary makers.

“Over the last 25 years I have found a way of making a documentary every, say, four or five years. This has been based on the realisation in the late 1970s that it can only be done as a ‘hobby’.”

“I spend thousands of hours making my films and completely devote my mind, body and spirit to them, but unless I discover some new finance scheme or receive an

enormous windfall very soon, I will not be able to continue as I will not be able to have luxurious lifestyle items such as food and shelter.”

“Our business has almost gone bankrupt so I’m forced to find a new way. I’ve made documentaries that rated and sold overseas but now I have to change tack. It’s easier to rely on jobs painting houses, even though I’ve been making documentaries the last ten years.”

7.5 An overview of the barriers

- There are two streams of documentary programming and they do not necessarily cross over.
- Commercial television networks focus on commissioning factual content that meets audience needs and suits scheduling slots that have been identified by programmers.
- Documentary makers working outside network television feel short-changed compared to the developmental pathway available to dramatic filmmakers.
- The SIPF is regarded as an excellent launching pad but other incentives for success are required.
- The high cost of archival material hampers some productions.
- Small documentary businesses are difficult to sustain.

8. Independent documentary makers: the opportunities

8.1 Talent development

Many documentary makers interviewed said they valued the professional development opportunities available through the funding bodies and industry organisations.

However, they felt these opportunities could be applied more consistently so that talent was nurtured through to the highest levels of documentary-making in New Zealand and internationally. They said it was vital that established documentary makers had career paths to keep improving their skills, mentor new talent and ensure aspects of the craft were not lost.

They also suggested that a small number of experienced, exceptional documentary makers could be funded to tell stories that don’t necessarily fit a cultural remit. Opportunities to develop professionally and create new work include:

- NZ On Air’s Springboard² scheme gives producers the means to develop projects, including high-end documentaries, outside the commissioning process.
- Professional development workshops and events are offered throughout the year by industry organisations – Script to Screen, Screen Directors Guild, SPADA, New Zealand Screen Council, NZ On Air, Women in Film and Television and New Zealand Film Commission.
- International professional development opportunities are available. Survey respondents listed those they had accessed, including:
 - Berlin Film Festival talent campus (funded by NZFC)
 - Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism
 - Maurits Binger Film Institute³, Amsterdam (funded by NZFC)
 - SPADA pitching competition
 - SPADA New Filmmaker of the Year Award
 - DOCNZ Forum/AIDC best pitch project award

“Springboard gave me breathing space to develop my next film. I could pay myself some money while researching.”

“I went to the Berlin Film Festival talent campus with funding from NZFC, which was an enormous opportunity I could never have afforded myself.”

“Outrageous Fortune is first-appointment viewing for New Zealand content in years and I would like to see the same with documentaries. Our documentaries should be as good as Child of Our Time – as well-researched, and look as good. You need good casting, storytelling, scripting done in the edit, good craftspeople making it – and you have a good film.”

“After I won the SPADA pitching competition [an experienced producer] came on board. I had already been shooting for 18 months. To apply for the NZFC Digital Post-Production Fund, an established producer needs to be attached. NZFC provided \$15,000 of a total post budget of \$40,000.”

“In New Zealand, the professional development opportunities are enormously subsidised. You can get experiences for free or very cheap that would cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars in other countries.”

8.2 Screening opportunities outside network television

² Springboard is a NZ On Air scheme designed to allow production companies and producers with a proven track record – but without an existing development structure – to develop drama, scripted comedy and high-end documentary projects to a stage where they can be presented to broadcasters and funders. Generally, up to \$150,000 is allocated each year.

³ The Maurits Binger Film Institute, also known as Binger Filmlab, can be accessed by documentary makers but it is a dramatic feature-based programme.

Film festivals, arthouse and provincial theatres, and alternative television channels have provided publicity and exhibition opportunities for non-commercial New Zealand documentaries. In some cases, documentary makers travel with their films throughout the country, talking to audiences and selling DVDs.

However, the costs can be prohibitive. Those with small SIPF grants can often barely afford posters. At the other end of the scale, getting on the international festival circuit can cost thousands of dollars – at the risk of no return.

Other observations from those interviewed:

- Film festivals are important for reaching audiences.
- A number of small digital theatres in towns and cities throughout New Zealand allow public access to documentaries that do not screen on television.
- The Sky Documentary Channel is acquiring local documentaries for several broadcasts but is paying low rates. TVNZ's two digital services, launched in September 2007 and March 2008, intend carrying a high level of local content but because of funding constraints will pay little for it. TVNZ says it wants to use its limited budget for digital channels on series programming that creates more awareness than one-off documentaries.
- Documentary makers should be included in international festivals and events, as feature film producers are through the New Zealand Film Commission.
- Broadcasters should continue to attend documentary conferences and be a part of this international sector.

“I’ll travel to every screening of my new documentary, from July until November. It’s about the battle between teachers and the community and bulk funding. It’s almost assured of being successful as it’ll be a useful resource for education. It’s taken three years to make.”

“It cost me \$7,000 to get one of my documentaries on to the international festival circuit but it didn’t get a distributor.”

“I’ve made good money from [one of my documentaries], compared with the material cost of making it. It played 13 weeks at the Academy Cinema. We pushed it in the media. It cost \$7,500 plus the music clearances, which were covered by the Film Commission. That doesn’t count two years of my time or the DOP/second camera and sound.”

“The participants in my documentary got excited because they thought it’d be on TV. But when we had a special Film Festival event with brass bands at Sky City they really owned it.”

“The local film festival was a great launching pad for my documentary. It got excellent reviews and audiences really responded to it. Since then, the Sky Documentary Channel has bought it.”

8.3 International opportunities

The international market for documentaries is difficult to access but offers potential for pre-sales, co-productions and broadcast opportunities. However, those interviewed did not see it as the solution to funding issues because they said that only some projects will have a universal appeal and character.

A number of small independents saw merit in putting time and money into developing overseas links through festivals, conferences, markets and co-productions.

Documentary makers looking for international sales felt that a co-ordinated “New Zealand” approach and development funding would help them get a project to the markets.

Opportunities arise in two stages of the process: pre-production and sales.

8.3.1 PRE-PRODUCTION

- Bidding against the rest of the world in an international market is challenging but the rewards of success make it worthwhile. The expectation of higher creative standards and production values drives documentary makers to higher levels of achievement.
- Relationships are created in international markets. It is where documentary makers find recognition, learn how to be part of the documentary “mafia” and operate in that world.

“I’m already accessing the international market. I’ve been to AIDC but not yet to Cannes or Banff. I need to get there and have product to sell: i.e. a bit of a catalogue. I’ve been to SPAA to keep in touch and see what’s happening internationally as they have more speakers, potential networks and it gives me energy to keep going.”

“I went to a market and created a relationship with someone who took on my project. Anyone can go. As a business person, you need to go as it opens your eyes to what an international market is about.”

“The best opportunity currently offered is selling an idea to Māori Television, getting NZ On Air and Te Māngai Pāho on board, then shopping the result at AIDC to get international co-pros to bolster funding.”

8.3.2 SALES

- Niche film festivals around the world (e.g. Human Rights Film Festival) provide opportunities for exposure.
- Small cable television channels in the United States offer large potential audiences but small fees.
- Local commitment is often the necessary first stage of an international deal.

“It is very hard to sell New Zealand content on the international market. Getting my documentary on TV in the United States, even on a small cable channel, felt like a big score.”

“I like screenings in film festivals that are for socio-political films like human rights film festivals. I recently had a screening in Albania and I’m pleased the film will be shown soon in Kosovo. I met a producer rep at Sundance 2004 and signed an agreement with him for an 18-month period in which he would look for distribution. Nothing has come of this yet.”

“My documentary has done moderately well on the international festival circuit and has screened in six countries now. The film has been finished almost a year but the work of selling is never over.”

8.4 Sales and distribution

Many of the documentary makers interviewed, especially those without television commissions, said they spend a lot of time securing distribution, applying to film festivals, making and selling DVDs, and approaching theatres and television channels.

One had set up her own *My Space* site for online sales where consumers pay to download material. Another had made enquiries to Joost TV, an internet television service based in the UK and established by the same company that launched Skype. Branding itself as “a new way of watching TV anywhere, anytime”, Joost TV does not acquire individual pieces of content but deals with content owners who can supply a minimum of 50 hours of content a year and who can manage their own channels. The content owner receives a small fee every time there is a download.

“I could potentially put my documentary on whale strandings on Joost for audiences outside New Zealand, making it accessible to the huge international community of viewers who are interested in that topic.”

“After my documentary had been on TV a few times, I contacted every DVD distributor in the country before finally making a distribution deal with Siren, a small label from Dunedin. I’m just in the process of distributing the DVD myself in the US through customflix.com, which is a print-on-demand system and makes the DVD available through amazon.com.”

“I spent a lot of time shopping the documentary around to theatrical distributors in New Zealand before we did our agreement with Arkles Entertainment, who did the theatrical release and the DVD. After pressing so hard with TVNZ, TV3 and Māori Television, it may be the case that in TV-land it only gets seen by a handful of people on Sky on Rialto or The Documentary Channel.”

Other observations include:

- Documentary makers need to seek out opportunities on pay and satellite channels, online services and in education.
- The rates for digital television are much lower than for traditional broadcast; there are no guaranteed revenues from online exposure; and DVD distribution carries financial risk unless it is small scale.
- Documentary makers need to explore these new distribution avenues, regardless of the current returns, because these are the distribution channels of the future.
- Documentary makers must be dedicated, tenacious, resourceful and committed if they are to succeed in marketing and distributing their documentaries.

8.5 Benefits of the Screen Innovation Production Fund

Documentary makers interviewed said the SIPF played an essential role in kick-starting or fostering talent and allowing documentary makers creative control. It is perceived as a hotly contested source of funding, with a growing number of applications from established documentary makers making it even more competitive.

They also felt that the SIPF's role in supporting innovation and experimentation should not be compromised by funding applications from established documentary makers with more traditional projects.

Other observations include:

- SIPF support helps documentary makers develop their skills and provides a foundation for seeking festival and other theatrical screenings.
- The SIPF offers creative freedom to grant recipients so they can develop their own voice.
- Recipients can take two to three years to complete their projects but the results sometimes have enduring cultural and social significance.
- The SIPF supports documentaries with a singular voice and point of view outside the television network world.
- The priorities of the SIPF only suit some projects and there should be more intermediate space for documentary makers who sit between those priorities and commercial mainstream television.

“The SIPF was a big thing for me in my career; it was the foundation. As soon as I had that support I could get some professionals to work with me. My documentary got screenings at festivals in New Zealand and in Tahiti. The grant kick-started me, not just the money but the support of having people behind me.”

“The fund is a god-send to New Zealand filmmakers and I could not be more grateful for the opportunities it has provided me.”

“My films would never have been made otherwise and they gave me a reputation with the NZFC.”

“The most important films are made through SIPF. You don’t feel there’s someone looking over your shoulder, you work with who you want. It’s such an important period of your creative development.”

8.6 Alternative funding opportunities

Documentary makers identified a number of opportunities they had accessed to help complete their projects, in addition to SIPF, NZ On Air, NZFC or Te Māngai Pāho funding. For example:

- Film School, University of Auckland – access to filming and editing equipment and scholarships
- New Zealand History Research Trust Fund (Ministry for Culture and Heritage) has offered awards in history since 1990. At least two documentary projects have benefited from the fund. The money can be used for travel, equipment, collecting oral histories, paying yourself a wage etc.
- donations or cut rates from post-production houses
- the Community Partnership, which is part of the Digital Strategy. The government provides \$20.7 million seed funding as partial support for partnership initiatives that will improve people’s capability and skills to use ICT and develop digital content. It supports grassroots community initiatives and is about innovation.
- established production companies: e.g. Gibson Group, acting as producer for emerging documentary makers and providing facilities and finance.

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage’s website NZLive.com lists sources of cultural funding and awards.

Many of those interviewed felt that documentary makers could be more inventive in seeking support from interested parties (e.g. NGOs, education sources, the business community) and reformatting the content for their sponsor’s purpose.

8.7 An overview of the opportunities

- Documentary makers appreciate the range of professional development workshops, events and awards available. Some of these lead on to opportunities to pitch in international forums or develop skills at overseas institutes.

- Some funding is provided for research but documentary makers felt there was merit in backing a small group of exceptional documentary makers to develop projects that do not necessarily fit the cultural remit.
- Increased interest in documentaries from film festivals, arthouse and regional cinemas, and non-mainstream television channels is good for exposure but provides small financial reward.
- The Screen Innovation Production Fund is seen to foster talent, promote creative freedom and provide a platform for success.
- There is concern that experienced and emerging documentary makers with traditional projects are competing for hotly contested SIPF grants.
- Alternative grants or support in kind are found from a variety of sources but these are sporadic and scarce.

9. Commissioning and programming

9.1 Television New Zealand

In 2005, TVNZ reviewed its approach to documentary programming, causing a hiatus in commissioning. The weekly Documentary New Zealand strand, which had enjoyed a prime-time slot for many years and consisted mainly of one-off programmes, was disbanded. In its place are prime-time smaller strands, which run across the schedule and group documentaries according to theme, content and tone. Documentaries with broad viewer appeal are commissioned for prime-time.

All documentary ideas must fit within the strands, which have a mix of local and overseas stories.

TVNZ also pointed to *NZ Festival*. This is a blue-chip series of one off feature length New Zealand stories, which the broadcaster would like to see continue.

Some documentary makers, it was felt, make films for themselves and do not ask about audiences – who they are, what language they speak, how they want to take on board the information that is offered, and why they would want to watch the film.

As a commercial business, TVNZ devises strategies to reach as many viewers as possible. First and foremost, it believes prime-time audiences are looking for entertainment. Programmes can still be informative or educational but the way they are told is crucial.

“We have to be careful we’re not making programmes for people because we think it’s good for them, that we’re not making spinach TV.”

The broadcaster rejects the notion that documentaries must be less challenging or dumbed down to make them accessible to a wide range of people.

“But we don’t want them to be desperately earnest. With our stories, we want to engage and keep people watching. You can convey thoughts, attitudes and information in a way that’s intelligent and reaches as many people as possible, and is not just for clever people.”

The idea is paramount in getting a proposal accepted. TVNZ says it is open to young or emerging documentary makers but encourages them to work with an experienced producer as a mentor. Writing is identified as the key skill lacking in factual storytelling in general.

“We have a dearth of good writers who can understand the story and tie it together. Interesting visualisation is fine but if you haven’t got the core story, like in a drama, no amount of embellishing will make it good.”

TVNZ decides on a case-by-case basis whether to allow initial theatrical release of a documentary that has been funded for broadcast. For instance, letting a documentary play in a cinema during a film festival can provide good publicity.

TVNZ is putting programmes out on more platforms (online and digital) and will consider whether theatrical release will jeopardise those platforms before making a decision.

9.2 TV3

TV3 is an entirely commercial network and, therefore, its commissioning and programming are ratings driven. Local documentaries play in the *Inside New Zealand* strand, which is now in its seventeenth year. *Inside New Zealand* continues to occupy a prime-time Thursday slot and comprises one-off documentaries that appeal to a broad audience. Documentaries from this strand have won a number of awards both within New Zealand and internationally.

TV3 commissions mainly one-off documentaries although sometimes these grow into two or three-parters. Almost 50 per cent of TV3’s documentaries are produced by small independent producers.

The network’s commissioner has selected and overseen more than 200 documentaries and is “acutely aware” of how each documentary has rated and what they are competing against on the schedules of the other free-to-air channels.

“Charming, quirky programmes may attract theatre audiences but you know they won’t attract a broad audience whereas New Zealand’s most obese woman probably will. ‘Big’ took a 42 per cent share. You can’t do that all the time but you get a sense of what will work.”

In 2007, TV3 screened 23 New Zealand documentaries – more documentaries than it had screened in each of the seven previous years.

Like all broadcasters, TV3 analyses the ratings every morning, keeps up to date with international trends, reads trade papers, and looks for ways to evolve. Currently that translates into “no historical, no natural history”. It also means more issues explored through people, especially when they take viewers to new places (e.g. *Transforming Keegan* and *Inside the Exclusive Brethren*); and more “tell me about me” stories (e.g. *What's Really In Our Food?*).

TV3 says that although it has a clear idea of what comprises documentary, audiences tend not to differentiate between documentary, popular factual and current affairs. Although it is vital that these programmes rate, the network looks for variation and tries to push the boundaries where it can. Topics must not only attract audiences but also have strong storytelling and treatments that will maintain viewers’ attention. “When you’re up against a strong drama on the other channel, you have to keep the audience.”

Theatrical releases prior to TV3 broadcast are not a problem for feature documentaries that are not particularly commercial.

The commissioner is sometimes frustrated by the quality of proposals. However, TV3 says it is open to anyone going and talking to them.

“They don’t need to be from an established company or to have spent hundreds of dollars on a proposal. It’s all about the strength of the story. We reject without discrimination if it’s not a strong idea.”

9.3 Māori Television

Māori Television’s legislative mandate is “to promote te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori through the provision of a high quality, cost-effective Māori television service, in both Māori and English, that informs, educates, and entertains a broad viewing audience, and, in doing so, enriches New Zealand’s society, culture, and heritage”.

Although its subject matter can be broad, the nature of its funding can mean there is a delicate balancing act to be negotiated. With the Māori language target across the schedule at 60 per cent, the opportunities for non-Māori language documentaries are reduced. There are three basic variations on funding of documentaries commissioned by Māori Television.

- 100% Te Māngai Pāho funded documentaries for budgets of up to \$100,000 (can go a little higher in special cases) and generally with between 30% and 100% Māori language content.
- Joint funding between Te Māngai Pāho and NZ On Air or other funders (e.g. *The Rain of the Children* and *Re-located Mountains*). These documentaries

don't need a Māori language requirement and can be made with a broader audience in mind. Budgets can range from \$150,000 to \$300,000 (or higher if funding is available: e.g. *The Rain of the Children*)

- Māori Television has recently secured a documentary strand from NZ On Air. Budgets will be on average \$150,000 and while a portion of the documentaries will need to meet the NZ On Air "rautaki Māori" criteria, there is the possibility for non-Māori documentaries.

Māori Television does not have the strong commercial imperative of mainstream free-to-air television. Although preferring conventional documentary storytelling, the network says it does not prescribe a rigid style and is, within reason, open to variations in programme length.

"If a story needs 78 minutes we let it. It is a negotiation with the producer and we will change during the course of the process. In the last 12 to 18 months we looked at the material for six hour-long [52 minutes] documentaries and decided they should go longer."

There are three prime documentary slots a week:

- Pakipumeka Aotearoa (New Zealand documentary): 52 minutes on Wednesdays at 8.30pm. These documentaries have no prescribed Māori language content although a number will have up to 50% Māori language.
- Koputu Taonga: 52 minutes on Wednesdays at 10pm - 100% in te reo Māori. There are some original documentaries commissioned for this slot but it also works for replay of TVNZ's *Waka Huia*.
- Pakipumeka o te Ao (international documentaries): 52 minutes on Tuesdays at 10.30pm. There are also replay slots on Friday and Saturday evenings that are used mostly for international documentaries or feature films.

Māori Television says it is more interested in a good idea than in style and will not elevate innovation over content. It is prepared to cope with technical deficiency if the quality of the story and idea justify it.

Māori Television puts "inexperienced" documentary makers with an experienced producer or executive producer. It is also investigating more innovative opportunities such as iwi access: e.g. Barry Barclay's community project. While not wanting to take a lead in large projects such as this, it will look for ways to participate and, in the changing digital environment, explore potential for user-generated material. The provision of increased funding of \$23.1 million over four years in the 2007 Budget ensures Māori Television can participate in the digital television era and enhance its current programming schedule.

Māori Television audience research suggests that documentaries are high on the list of programming to attract new viewers to the channel. The channel is focused on growing its audience among Māori and "open viewers" (i.e. urban, 40+, interested in current

affairs, New Zealand movies and documentaries). Seventy per cent of the audience is non-Māori, who say they are attracted by the channel's underlying philosophy to provide "indigenous as well as fresh perspectives".

Theatrical release before broadcast is encouraged as promotion creates a profile for the documentary or film. Well-made documentaries or films can go on to have a long life through DVD sales, educational use, and repeat screenings on network and smaller television channels.

9.4 Sky Documentary Channel

Sky's Documentary Channel was launched in November 2006 as an outsourced, privately owned venture run out of Richard Driver's Visionary TV production company. The documentary sector sees it as a welcome additional outlet where New Zealand documentaries can be seen. It does, however, pay low rates for existing material and generally does not commission new material.

Although TVNZ is dedicating one of its Freeview digital channels to factual programming in 2008, the Sky channel has a head start in acquiring "an eclectic programming mix" of home-grown and international documentaries. The channel offers content with a strong contemporary focus on people and popular culture as well as critically acclaimed work from master documentary makers. It has a cumulative audience of 760,000 viewers a month.

The channel operates as a small business in a competitive business environment. It pays small licence fees of approximately \$400 to \$600 although the occasional highly successful film festival feature will be paid a premium. Richard Driver, a former independent documentary maker who says he became disheartened by the commercial pressures of mainstream television, would like to see funding set aside for more documentaries with creative licence. He says his company cannot help with production finance until there is a change in the remits of funding bodies to allow for commissions on pay television.

9.5 TVNZ Digital Services

TVNZ 6 was launched in late 2007. It features general entertainment aimed at families and includes a nightly prime-time slot for showcasing arts and music, local comedy and drama. Local content makes up 70 per cent of the schedule.

TVNZ 7 was launched in March 2008 as an advertising-free channel on the Freeview digital platform. It provides approximately ten minutes of news on the hour with the rest of the hour made up of current affairs, factual programming, sport and documentaries. Local content makes up 70 per cent of TVNZ 7's schedule.

A dedicated slot for New Zealand documentaries will be scheduled seven days a week in three time slots per day. TVNZ is approaching producers for access to their back

catalogues and will consider anything from popular interest through to niche programmes, particularly profiles of artists and their works for TVNZ 6. Payment is approximately \$500 (the standard rate is \$575) for ten plays over two years.

10. Exhibitors and distributors

The New Zealand International Film Festival gives documentaries plenty of screen time (50 documentaries in 2005, 54 in 2006 and 53 in 2007), including a number of local productions. A few documentaries including *Fahrenheit 9/11* are returning on general release in cinemas. The Festival has consistently programmed documentaries for a keen core audience.

In the past three to five years there has been a broader acceptance in New Zealand, as in other parts of the world, that a good night's entertainment for movie-goers can include information. Several documentaries, including *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *An Inconvenient Truth*, have been feature hits outside the normal documentary corridor of arthouse cinemas and film festivals.

An experienced executive from one of New Zealand's biggest mainstream cinema chains believes the increased popularity of documentaries is an outcome of a broadening of the audience base. Older movie-goers (35–60 years) make up the fastest growing area of cinema audiences and the market has to accommodate their need for more than “coke and popcorn” movies. Quirky arthouse films such as *Babel*, *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Sideways*, which have moved from the arthouse circuit to multiplexes, are being joined in the multiplexes by entertaining documentaries that don't preach. “People won't pay for that.”

Some documentaries (e.g. *Fahrenheit 9/11*) cut across age groups and are important in changing perceptions about the entertainment value of documentaries. Intelligent, challenging and fictionalised accounts of serious issues in dramas (e.g. *Thank You For Smoking* and *The Insider*) lead audiences to more traditional documentaries such as *An Inconvenient Truth*.

The box-office success of a number of documentaries has encouraged New Zealand sales agents to look seriously at the market potential of a range of documentaries, including *Super Size Me*, *Travelling Birds* and *Spellbound*. Audience pleasers still tend to be high-concept documentaries with marketable angles and/or offering viewers a spectacle (*Travelling Birds*) that could not be fully realised on a television screen.

While acknowledging that cinema audiences have broadened, exhibitors, distributors and film festival organisers interviewed for this research were reluctant to say there has been a major sea change. In the end, market value is what matters to mainstream exhibitors. Over 2007, three or four documentaries went mainstream while others were screened at Rialto.

Small independents – Academy, Paramount, Lighthouse, Metro – provide a home for smaller documentaries that have been successful on festival circuits. *Kaikohe Demolition*, for example, made a respectable \$26,500 over 13 weeks in Auckland’s Academy Cinema and went on to make a total of \$50,000 nationwide.

11. International comparisons

This section outlines support for documentary making in Australia, Canada and Ireland. While international models can inform discussions about New Zealand’s documentary sector, solutions have to be uniquely tailored to this country.

11.1 Australia

In 2007, the Australian government introduced the \$300m Australian Screen Production Incentive, a package of tax incentives designed to encourage private investment in Australian-produced films, television shows and documentaries. It replaces existing schemes and includes a sliding tax rebate of 20 to 40 per cent to stimulate private production and an increase in the refundable tax offset for higher-budget productions.

In mid 2008, the Film Finance Corporation, Australia Film Commission and Film Australia will be united under a new entity to be known as Screen Australia.

11.1.1 TAX INCENTIVES

Investors in documentaries can claim a 100 per cent tax deduction on investment in films that are certified as “Australian films” and “qualifying Australian films”.

The definition of an Australian film is a film “made wholly or substantially in Australia” with “significant Australian content” or a film that is an official co-production. “Content” is assessed against creative control, subject matter, where the film is made, copyright ownership, production company ownership, funding sources and production budget.

11.1.2 FILM FINANCE CORPORATION

The government-owned Film Finance Corporation (FFC) was established in 1988 to support independent filmmakers in producing a diverse range of Australian film and television programmes to strengthen a sense of Australian identity.

The FFC invests in documentaries with an Australian free-to-air or pay television pre-sale. It does not invest in other actuality programmes, such as reality television, infotainment, current affairs, cooking, “how to” or sports programmes.

The FFC invests in both one-off documentaries and series. Government-funded organisations with a brief to produce documentaries are not eligible (e.g. ABC, SBS).

Eligible projects will either be:

- made wholly or substantially in Australia with significant Australian content; or
- an official co-production made under a treaty or similar arrangement.

“Significant Australian content” is not limited to subject matter but also includes creative control, where the film is made, copyright ownership, sources of funds and production expenditure.

Documentary funding

(a) Domestic door

This requires a local television pre-sale only, and normally deals with specifically Australian stories and issues:

- a minimum of 40 per cent licence fee from a domestic free-to-air broadcaster
- caps of \$200,000 on one-off programmes and \$600,000 for a series
- where there are insufficient funds to meet demand from eligible projects the FFC will use the selection criteria of:
 - balance of experienced and emerging practitioners
 - balance between one-off programmes and series
 - diversity of subject matter.

Producers are encouraged to develop and present a marketing strategy for international sales to the FFC at rough cut. The FFC may be prepared to consider, on a case-by-case basis, an additional investment to allow producers to approach international broadcasters with the aim of securing a rough-cut sale.

(b) International door

This requires a local television pre-sale as well as international pre-sales/guarantees. The FFC will invest up to 50 per cent of the budget in projects that meet varying co-financing requirements of:

- pre-sale from a domestic network
- an international sales agent
- international territory pre-sale(s).

(c) Special documentary fund

The FFC allocated up to \$750,000 of its 2006/07 documentary funds for the production of five documentaries with no requirement for market attachments. It aims to give filmmakers the opportunity to be more innovative by stepping outside the potential limitations of broadcaster commissioning and FFC market requirements.

Projects are selected on the track record and vision of the creative team, the distinctiveness and quality of the project, the proposed outcomes and the potential to achieve them.

Additional financing measures

- (a) The financing of feature-length documentaries for theatrical release is considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (b) Where there is a possibility for enhancement (e.g. feature-length version for television), the FFC requires an increase in the licence fee before increasing its investment.
- (c) If a website or DVD is incorporated into a documentary from the outset, the FFC can invest in these components.

11.1.3 AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION

The Australia Film Commission (AFC) invests in documentary production for the purposes of professional development. Projects must demonstrate strong original ideas, a skilful grasp of documentary form and storytelling, and professional development opportunities for key team members.

The AFC encourages co-financing with other agencies and investors but does not necessarily require broadcaster involvement for all its investments, except for documentary series.

AFC documentary financing strands are:

- early development of pitching materials
- development of outstanding projects (one-offs or series)
- shooting time-critical material
- production and/or post-production – primarily for professional development.

11.1.4 FILM AUSTRALIA

Film Australia is one of Australia's largest producers of television documentaries and education programmes. Through the National Interest Programme (NIP), it aims to produce, distribute and market documentaries that combine the key elements of an Australian perspective, an engaging and entertaining story, a fresh and original approach, and an intelligent voice that is insightful and revealing.

Because NIP productions are required to achieve the widest possible distribution and exhibition, most will be made for television. Film Australia seeks a broadcaster pre-sale from either the public broadcasters or the commercial networks.

Projects may also be developed for digital or subscription channels. From time to time, non-broadcast platforms for innovative projects are also considered.

11.2 Canada

Telefilm Canada, a federal cultural agency, provides financial assistance and strategic leverage to the industry to produce audiovisual productions that reflect Canadian society.

TelefilmCanada administers equity funding to independent producers through the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) to produce high-quality television programmes that reflect Canadian stories, culture and themes. CTF is a public/private contestable fund half-funded by central government with the other half from a 5 per cent levy on the revenues of cable and satellite operators.

Documentary is one of five priority genres. Funds are distributed to independent producers who must have a broadcaster commitment to transmit the programmes, and implicitly to co-fund its production. CTF funding is used to target smaller independent producers, with close to 90 per cent of funds going to small and medium-size producers.

A production budget is typically made up of:

- 30 to 50 per cent CTF funds
- 30 per cent broadcaster licence fee
- the rest from third-party investments, international pre-sales, tax write-offs.

Regulatory measures are also in place to ensure programmes funded by the CTF are of high quality and broadcast in prime-time hours. Each broadcaster must screen priority programming, including documentaries, for at least eight hours a week in prime time.

11.3 Ireland

11.3.1 BROADCASTING COMMISSION OF IRELAND

Through its funding scheme, Sound & Vision, the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) is responsible for the disbursement of 5 per cent of the public broadcasting licence fee to support new television and radio programmes. The funding is used to produce programmes in the areas of Irish culture, heritage, experience, the Irish language and adult literacy.

Grants are between 65 per cent and 95 per cent of the total budget, based on a number of factors. These include the potential to source other funding and the extent to which the proposal meets the objectives of the scheme.

Requirements:

- a broadcaster letter of commitment confirming peak-time broadcast of the documentary (between 6pm to 11.30pm)
- programmes must be broadcast on free-to-air television or on cable as part of a community content contract.

11.3.2 IRISH FILM BOARD

The Irish Film Board (IFB) supports feature, short and medium-length films, including documentaries. It provides financing for the development, production and international promotion of Irish films.

One of its 14 funding programmes aims to support the production of documentary films, with increasing emphasis on feature-length creative documentaries capable of reaching an international audience through theatrical and festival exposure.

Funding is provided in the form of limited-recourse loans recoverable from a share of revenues from exploitation of the film and entitling IFB to a share of net profits.

The IFB encourages documentary filmmaking that expresses a view of the world that is both strongly personal and uniquely Irish. It aims to foster Irish talent presenting non-fiction material in a way that transcends cultures and languages, and uses the techniques of cinema to full emotional and aesthetic effect. Documentaries primarily designed to appeal to a television audience and not offering a creative treatment of the subject are unlikely to be funded.

See *Appendix 3* and *Appendix 4* for the mandates of New Zealand documentary funders and government funding of New Zealand film and television content.

12. A way forward

In the course of this research, documentary makers identified gaps at certain points in the documentary funding and production process, including:

- an agreed sector definition and guidelines for publicly funded documentaries
- the longer-term need to foster and nurture careers
- support for talented documentary makers driven by non-commercial imperatives.

The following suggestions are offered as a guide to help fill these gaps. They were extracted from interviews with documentary makers taking part in the research.

12.1 Funding and distribution

Documentary makers would like to see NZ On Air enhance its commitment to:

- encouraging multiple and repeat screenings of documentaries made with public funding: e.g. theatrical and broadcast releases
- encouraging diversity and tagging smaller funding pools within the documentary allocation to arts, science, innovation etc
- broadening opportunities for screenings by considering applications from pay television and a cluster of smaller regional channels

- offering development funding and increased budgets for a handful of ambitious, high-end documentaries that have theatrical release and international sales potential.
- providing financial assistance for documentary makers to attend international documentary conferences, festivals and markets.

Documentary makers' suggestions to TVNZ include:

- continuing to offer reasonable rates for archival material that has already been publicly funded
- where appropriate, supporting local festival screenings of certain documentaries
- supporting multiple screenings on the new digital channels, with fair terms of trade offered to documentary makers
- greater promotion and publicity of a programme, especially if it is scheduled outside prime time.

12.2 Specific documentary funds

Documentary makers suggested that all funders could consider the following ideas.

(a) **Non-mainstream documentaries**

A specific fund could be set up with a panel of expert peers to consider applications and ensure robust decisions are made. Agencies could consider supporting one of three types of documentary in line with their aims:

- innovative or experimental work similar to current SIPF interests
- low-budget community documentaries
- feature projects – three or four a year.

(b) **Feature documentary partnership**

A feature documentary partnership would require relatively low investment from parties but would increase the number of completed films in circulation and contribute to the fulfilment of the partners' cultural mandates.

In the course of this research, one documentary maker suggested the following model:

(i) *Initial application*

Maximum two-page application for development grant of \$3000–\$5000. This would be modelled on the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) and the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) pitch documents and specify that the documentaries have “cinematic” appeal.

- (ii) Select a reasonable number of applicants for development to the next round.
- (iii) *Final application*
Applicants will be required to produce:
 - full treatment and visual style
 - full budget
 - a distribution commitment from a reputable theatrical distributor
 - a possible sample reel.

Budget targets: \$200,000 to \$500,000

(c) **Pitching fund**

A pitching fund would create the potential for the production of feature documentaries with theatrical and international potential, without the involvement of broadcasters.

The pitch would be made at AIDC. The funder would:

- cover the costs of the conference
- commit to 25 per cent of the production budget if the pitch is successful. This would be in the order of \$100,000 if the film succeeded in gaining the remaining 75 per cent from international networks at AIDC.

A \$2,500 travel grant could be offered to all documentary makers who succeed in having their proposal accepted at AIDC. In reality, three or four New Zealand projects would be likely to compete for the right to pitch. An executive producer could be assigned to represent all the New Zealand projects to help documentary makers negotiate with broadcasters and learn the business.

The net result would be a low-risk investment to create a new framework for producing documentaries. It would cost around \$10,000 a year in travel grants and possibly \$100,000 for any project securing funding at AIDC. The return would be a high-quality, New Zealand-made documentary produced with a budget of \$400,000, with domestic and international screenings.

The scheme could close a gap in New Zealand's documentary environment by providing opportunities for the most experienced documentary makers as well as fostering talent by offering a step up into theatrical feature documentary.

(d) **A fellowship: funding the individual documentary maker**

Many of those interviewed felt that some of New Zealand's exceptional documentary makers were undervalued and underused because funding is project-based. An annual fellowship aimed at supporting one or two people to take projects through from development to release would help redress the balance.

12.3 Documentary shopfront group

There was considerable support for the establishment of a grouping or association of documentary makers to act as an independent distribution collective to:

- make and distribute DVDs
- provide co-ordination for festivals
- liaise with programmers to supply a catalogue of documentaries
- set up and share a NZ Docs website for promoting and downloading content, and building the NZ Docs brand internationally.

12.4 Online opportunities

Online services are still in their infancy and a good business model is needed to drive opportunities. The potential offered by an online channel specialising in New Zealand documentaries is something documentary makers want to explore as a means of accessing international audiences, triggering sales and collecting fees from downloads.

In Australia, the internet server, Big Pond, offers one model. It is buying packages of programmes through distributors and doing 50/50 deals with them for documentaries that go online for rapid download.

Documentaries can also showcase New Zealand to foreign businesses and people. They offer opportunities for tourism and for promoting New Zealand at low cost.

13. A final word

Based on interviews with the independent documentary sector, this qualitative research aimed to provide a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities for documentary making in New Zealand.⁴

New Zealand has a small population base, a mixed broadcasting economy and a cultural sector strongly reliant on government subsidy. International models, discussed in Section 11, can inform these discussions but solutions have to be uniquely tailored to this country.

Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission hope that this report will spark informed discussion among documentary makers, industry organisations, exhibitors

⁴ This report encapsulates the views of the sector. These views are not necessarily those of Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission.

and distributors, funders and broadcasters about ways to meet the challenges facing the documentary sector.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Who was interviewed

1. Documentary makers

Screen Innovation Production Fund recipients

Gillian Ashurst, Christchurch; Alister Barry, Wellington; Florian Habicht, Auckland; Dean Hapeta, Wellington; Sandor Lau, Auckland; Roseanne Liang, Auckland; Jim Marbrook, Auckland; Briar March, Auckland; Makerita Urale, Wellington; Luke Wheeler, Auckland; Errol Wright, Wellington

Emerging documentary makers (in addition to SIPF recipients)

Jess Feast, Wellington; James Frankham, Auckland

Experienced documentary makers

David Baldock, Ninox Films, Wellington; Barry Barclay, He Taonga Films, Hokianga; Andy Bean, iMotion Ltd, Christchurch; Costa Botes, Lone Pine Film and TV Productions Ltd, Wellington; Arani Cuthbert, Diva Productions, Auckland; Annie Goldson, Occasional Productions, Auckland; Roger Horrocks, Point of View Productions, Auckland; Cosmo Kentish Barnes, Production Line, Christchurch; Veronica McCarthy, Raconteur International Ltd, Christchurch; Brita McVeigh, Wellington; Paora Maxwell, Te Aratai Productions Ltd, Auckland; Stephen O’Meagher, Desert Road Productions, Auckland; Justin Pemberton, The TV Set, Auckland; Leanne Pooley, Specific Films, Auckland; Gaylene Preston, Gaylene Preston Productions, Wellington; Dan Salmon, Auckland (also former chair of NZ Screen Directors Guild); Gary Scott, Gibson Group, Wellington; Virginia Wright, Southern Screen Productions, Christchurch; Peter Young, Fisheye Films, Christchurch

2. Industry organisations and groups

NZ On Air – Glenn Usmar, Television Manager; SPADA – Penelope Borland, Executive Director; Screen Directors Guild – Anna Cahill, Executive Director; New Zealand Screen Council – Tim Thorpe, Executive Director

3. Broadcasters

TVNZ – Jude Callen, Commissioner, Documentaries; TV3 – Sue Woodfield, Commissioner, Documentaries; Māori Television – Larry Parr, Programmer; TVNZ

Digital Services – Julia Jensen, Programmer; SKY Documentary Channel – Richard Driver, Programmer

4. Distributors/exhibitors

John Davies – Arkles Entertainment; Gina Dellabarca – Academy Cinemas; Joe Moodabe – Chair, SkyCity Cinemas Advisory Board; Alex Lee – DocNZ; Bill Gosden – New Zealand Film Festival, Executive Director

Jane Wrightston, Chief Executive, NZ On Air and Peter Parussini, Head of Corporate Affairs, TVNZ were also consulted.

Appendix 2: A timeline of the independent documentary sector

- 1964 New Zealand's first locally produced documentary series, *Islands of the Gulf*, produced by Shirley Maddock and dealing with the Hauraki Gulf, screens on AKTV2. The series of five half-hour programmes enjoyed widespread popularity. Maddock said, "It was time that we reflected our landscape, our culture and our people."⁵
- 1973 National Film Unit produces *The Years Back*, a 13-part series on New Zealand history, and *Gone Up North For a While*, a well-received and influential drama/documentary on teenage pregnancy.
- 1973 The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council establishes the Film Project Fund to develop the craft of filmmaking and the feature film industry by offering grants to independent filmmakers.
- 1974 With John O'Shea as producer, Barry Barclay completes six groundbreaking television documentaries, *Tangata Whenua*, for Pacific Films. Researched and written by Michael King, the series screens on TV One and is the first time Māori have been significantly portrayed on television. The in-depth examination of Māori culture is "a triumphant recognition of the value of outside producers".⁶
- 1978 The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) is established to encourage, assist and promote New Zealand filmmaking.
- 1978 With the establishment of the NZFC, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council refocuses its funding priorities for moving image to support "low-budget experimental films of a non-commercial nature".

⁵ Day, Patrick: *Voice and Vision*. p 65

⁶ Ibid, p 168

- 1978 The Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) sets up a Commissioned Independent Productions scheme to give television opportunities to independent filmmakers.
- 1978 BCNZ establishes the Natural History Unit in Dunedin to produce wildlife documentaries.
- 1981 *Landmarks*, a ten-part series on New Zealand's landscape and society, blends education and entertainment to become the most expensive, ambitious documentary series made at the time. It is part-funded by the Department of Education, which has the right to use the series, a book and out-takes for other purposes.
- 1983 Theatrical release of the documentary, *Patu*, produced and directed by Merata Mita, about the civil unrest at the time of the 1981 Springbok tour.
- 1984 The Creative Film and Video Fund (CFVF) is established as a partnership between the QE II Arts Council and the NZFC to "broaden the scope of film and video activity". It is the only public funding available for low-budget, moving-image projects. Over its 11 years, the Fund supports 300 works, including documentaries. TVNZ (1988–1992) and NZ On Air (1995–1996) are equal financial partners during parts of the Fund's life.
- 1988 Ruth Harley is appointed as TVNZ's first commissioning editor to provide liaison with the independent producers.
- 1989 The Broadcasting Commission (NZ On Air) is established to fund New Zealand television programmes. Its primary functions are to "reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture"⁷ by promoting programmes about New Zealand and New Zealand interests; and promoting Māori language and Māori culture. It must ensure that reasonable funding provision is made to assist in the production of documentary programmes. By the end of 2007, NZ On Air had funded more than 2,000 hours, representing approximately \$200m investment.
- 1989 TVNZ becomes a State Owned Enterprise with a profit-driven mandate and requirement to return an annual dividend to the government. It is also charged with providing programming that reflects and fosters New Zealand's culture and identity.
- 1989 TV3 is launched, giving independent producers a second potential buyer of programmes.
- 1990 Sky Television, New Zealand's first pay television service, begins broadcasting.

⁷ Broadcasting Act 1989: s.36

- 1991 TV3 launches *Inside New Zealand*, a documentary series that continues to occupy a prime-time slot in 2008.
- 1993 The QE II Arts Council sets up a pilot joint initiative with NZ On Air and TVNZ for a documentary fellowship to “support new directions in quality documentary films by experienced filmmakers”. Merata Mita and Annie Goldson are recipients before the fellowship is discontinued.
- 1993 Te Māngai Pāho is established to promote Māori language and culture through funding for television and radio programming.
- 1996 The Screen Innovation Production Fund replaces the Creative Film and Video Fund. It is the only public funding available for low-budget moving image, with the average grant being about \$15,000.
- 1998 Prime Television begins broadcasting. In 2004, it becomes eligible for NZ On Air funding.
- 2003 TVNZ becomes a Crown company with a charter. It is now required to balance commercial return with public broadcasting objectives and receives direct funding for charter purposes. This gives independent producers an additional funding source.
- 2003 The Television Local Content Group, made up of national free-to-air broadcasters, SPADA and NZ On Air, is set up to discuss targets for local content and other issues related to television production and broadcasting.
- 2003 NZ On Air sets out its new documentary strategy. This includes support for a “blue chip” series, a low-cost innovative strand to allow for the emergence of new talent, and funding for the development of selected documentaries with matching broadcaster contributions.
- 2003 The Screen Production Industry Taskforce releases its recommendations for the economic growth of the sector. These include the establishment of a Screen Council to provide a leadership voice and implement the report’s recommendations.
- 2004 The Māori Television Service is launched to play a major role in the revitalisation of Māori language and culture.
- ~~2004~~
- 2006 Sky TV Digital launches the History, Arts and Documentary channels. These are in addition to the Discovery and National Geographic channels. The Documentary Channel launches in November 2006. It schedules local as well as international content but does not commission. Sky Digital subscribers represent 43 per cent of New Zealand television homes.

- 2005 The government releases the Broadcasting Action Plan for “building a strong and sustainable public broadcasting environment for New Zealand”. The plan includes “re-examining NZ On Air’s statutory definitions and functions so that it can support a more diverse range of content”. This will take account of the new kinds of content made possible by developments in technology (e.g. digital transmission and the internet).
- 2005 The government releases the Digital Strategy and Action Plan for ensuring all New Zealanders benefit from information and communications technologies. The plan promotes broadband uptake and fast access. The \$400m for digital projects includes \$20.7m for a Community Partnership Fund “to support grass roots initiatives that will build ICT skills in communities and regions, and help create distinctive New Zealand content”.
- 2006 The government announces plans for a free-to-air digital television service, Freeview, a consortium of New Zealand’s free-to-air broadcasters: TVNZ, CanWest, Māori TV and Radio New Zealand. The eventual switch-off of analogue services will take six to ten years.
- 2006 TVNZ announces that with government funding support, it will launch two advertising-free digital channels, one focussing on news, current affairs and documentaries, and the other on “family”, pre-school and the arts programming. The channels are planned to begin broadcast in 2007/08.
- 2006 A discussion document on the Digital Content Strategy is released. This is a sub-strategy of the Digital Strategy. Content is described as an enabler: “The availability of unique New Zealand content will help drive demand for broadband, improve the return on investment in capability, and create opportunities for commercial use.”

Appendix 3: Mandates of documentary funders

NZ ON AIR

The key legislative function of NZ On Air is to “reflect and develop New Zealand identity and culture by promoting programmes about New Zealand and New Zealand interests”. In considering a proposal, the legislation states that NZ On Air must take into account “the likelihood that the proposed programme or programmes, if produced, would be broadcast”.

In the 18 years since NZ On Air was established, policy has evolved to determine how the terms of the legislation will be interpreted and implemented.

NZ On Air’s television policies:

- Prior commitment to a project is required from a New Zealand broadcaster, including for development funding applications (development is usually funded 50:50 by NZ On Air and the broadcaster).
- The application for funding must be accompanied by written confirmation from a New Zealand broadcaster that the programme will be screened, including intended timeslots and details of the broadcaster's licence fee contribution.
- NZ On Air has broad objectives to fund locally made programmes that are:
 - (a) of interest to the mainstream audience but too risky and/or expensive for the market to fund fully
 - (b) focussed on minority interests and are therefore not commercially viable.
- NZ On Air's funding criteria are based on meeting the requirements of the Broadcasting Act. The following considerations must be taken into account when assessing funding applications:
 - reflects and develops New Zealand's identity and culture
 - fulfils NZ On Air's function to ensure a range of broadcasts is available to women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, diverse religious and ethical beliefs
 - ensures reasonable provision is made to assist in the production and broadcasting of documentary programmes.

In line with NZ On Air's strategic plan, the objectives for documentary programming are:

- to maintain and, where possible, improve audience satisfaction levels with the programmes funded on their behalf
- to work with the industry to achieve a strong growth-focussed documentary programming sector, delivering consistently high standards and innovative programmes
- to contribute, through documentary programming, to the development of New Zealand's knowledge economy and social cohesion.

TE MĀNGAI PĀHO AND MĀORI TELEVISION SERVICE

Each organisation has specific legislative requirements.

Māori Television Service's (MTS) principal function is "to promote te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori through the provision of a high quality, cost-effective Māori television service, in both Māori and English, that informs, educates, and entertains a broad viewing audience, and, in doing so, enriches New Zealand's society, culture, and heritage".

One of Te Māngai Pāho's (TMP) principal functions is to promote te reo Māori and tikanga Māori by making funds available for the production and broadcasting of television programmes.

Māori Television Service targets the bulk of its funds at programmes to be broadcast on Māori Television and aims to achieve a 50:50 mix of Māori and English language.

Māori Television aims to achieve an overall 50:50 mix of Māori and English language material, produced in New Zealand and funded by TMP.

SCREEN INNOVATION PRODUCTION FUND

The SIPF is a partnership between Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Commission. Its purpose is to provide grants for emerging or experienced moving-image makers for innovative and experimental moving-image productions.

NZFC contributes \$350,000 of the annual \$600,000 Fund.

The SIPF gives priority to innovative art projects and production proposals in these categories:

- Projects by emerging video and filmmakers of promise that emphasise innovation within or between moving-image genres
- Projects by experimental or fine art film and video makers
- Projects by artists exploring digital technologies giving priority to the moving image
- Exceptional innovative non-commercial projects by established film and video makers.

NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

The NZFC's main purpose is to invest in the development, production, marketing and sales of New Zealand films, both domestically and internationally. The emphasis is on audience-focused features and the business of filmmaking.

The NZFC will consider applications for production financing for cinematic documentaries in exceptional circumstances.

The NZFC advises potential applicants that to find a cinema audience, a documentary feature film must be driven by an idea, a theme, a character and/or a vision of sufficient scope to make people go to a cinema to see it.

Projects most likely to gain support will need to demonstrate "cinematic scope", which includes some or all of the following: a distinct big screen aesthetic, a dramatic narrative or emotional journey, a compelling argument or view of the world presented by a

charismatic and/or famous individual, access to places or individuals never before seen on the screen.

The applicant must demonstrate market support: eg. letters of interest from New Zealand cinema distributors and occasionally also international distributors.

CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND

Creative New Zealand was established as a crown entity under the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 1994. Among its principle functions, set out in the Act, are:

- to encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders
- to recognise in the arts the role of Māori as tangata whenua
- to promote the development of a New Zealand identity in the arts
- to encourage, promote, and support the arts of the Pacific Islands' peoples of New Zealand and the arts of the diverse cultures of New Zealand
- to uphold and promote the rights of artists and the right of persons to freedom in the practice of the arts.

Appendix 4: Government funding

Figures supplied by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage show that in the 2007/08 financial year, total government budgeted funding of New Zealand film and television content through TVNZ, New Zealand Film Commission, NZ On Air, Creative New Zealand, Te Māngai Pāho and Māori Television is \$177,248,000 (excl. GST). This figure comprises:

- \$35,911,000 for TVNZ (incorporating Direct Funding to support Charter implementation of \$15,111,000 and \$20,800,000 for digital services)
- \$10,111,000 through the New Zealand Film Commission
- \$71,670,000 through NZ On Air
- \$250,000 through Creative New Zealand
- \$41,200,000 through Te Māngai Pāho, incorporating \$16,100,000 to Māori Television, \$25,000,000 in contestable television funding \$100,000 TV industry co-ordination.
- \$18,106,000 to Māori Television through Te Puni Kokiri.

Total television funding for 2007/08 is \$166,887,000 compared with \$63,713,000 in 2000/01, an increase of 162 per cent. Māori Television and Direct Funding for TVNZ did not exist in 2000/01. Nevertheless, the figures represent a significant increase in funding available to the independent production sector in the past seven years.

NZ ON AIR

Documentary hours: funding, 1997/98 to 2006/07

Year	Hours	Funding
1997/98	119	\$9,356,104
1998/99	104	\$9,641,825
1999/00	120	\$9,451,070
2000/01	103.5	\$8,732,280
2001/02	91	\$8,761,862
2002/03	109	\$8,704,466
2003/04	133.5	\$9,380,049
2004/05	103.5	\$9,075,512
2005/06	126.5	\$11,812,795
2006/07	104	\$9,995,809

Source: NZ On Air annual reports

TVNZ

Since 2003, TVNZ has been receiving \$15 to \$17 million of government funding per year for charter programmes. A portion of this funding has been allocated for documentaries. Until 2005, TVNZ used some of this funding to co-fund documentaries with NZ On Air. Only the 2006 figure represents additional new programmes.

Documentary hours: 2003/04 to 2005/06

Years	Hours	Funding received
2003/04	70.5	\$2.5m
2004/05	54.5	\$2.4m
2005/06	33	\$3.6m

TE MĀNGAI PĀHO

Te Māngai Pāho provides direct funding to the Māori Television Service of approximately \$16 to \$18 million and also funds programmes by independent production companies.

Documentary hours: funding, 2003/04 to 2005/06

Years	Hours	Funding
2003/04	34	\$1,254,000
2004/05	15	\$547,000
2005/06	32.5	\$2,177,644

NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

A feature documentary, Vincent Ward's *Rain of the Children*, is currently in production and is an extended remake of his earlier work, *In Spring One Plants Alone*. Over the years, the NZFC has invested in 71 documentaries of ten minutes to an hour's duration and seven significant feature documentaries.

Feature documentaries: funded by New Zealand Film Commission

Year	Title	Producer	Director
2007	Rubbings from a Live Man	Philippa Campbell	Florian Habicht
2006	Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls	Arani Cuthbert	Leanne Pooley
2005	Rain of the Children	Vincent Ward, Marg Slater, Tainui Stephens	Vincent Ward
2003	Blerta Revisited	Barrie Everard, Geoff Murphy	Geoff Murphy
2003	Hotere ⁸	Mereta Mita, Eliza Bidois	Merata Mita
2001	The Feathers of Peace ⁹	Ruth Kaupua	Barry Barclay
1997	Punitive Damage ¹⁰	Annie Goldson	Annie Goldson
1995	War Stories ¹¹	Gaylene Preston	Gaylene Preston
1983	Patu!	Mereta Mita	Merata Mita
1976	Off The Edge	Michael Firth	Michael Firth

Documentaries with post-production finance from NZFC

Financial Year	Title	Producer	Director
2007-8	The Art Star and the Sudanese Twins	Pietra BrettKelly	Pietra BrettKelly
2006-7	A Civilised Society	Alister Barry	Alister Barry
	Cowboys and Communists	Dave Gibson	Jess Feast
	Michael King - A Moment in Time	Glenis Giles	Clare O'Leary
	Antonello and the Architect	Tony Hiles	Tony Hiles
	La Verdad	Helen Smyth	Helen Smyth
2005-6	The Last Resort	Errol Wright and Abi King-Jones	Errol Wright and Abi King-Jones
	Squeegee Bandit	Rhonda Kite and Sandor Lau	Sandor Lau
	Struggle No More	Costa Botes	Costa Botes
	Waves	Li Tao	Li Tao

⁸ Funded through Documentary fellowship a joint initiative between NZ On Air and TVNZ

⁹ Also funded by NZ on Air

¹⁰ As above

¹¹ As above

2004-5	Banana in a Nutshell	Roseanne Liang	Roseanne Liang
2003-4	Woodenhead	Florian Habicht	Florian Habicht
	In Spring One Plants Alone		Vincent Ward

CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND

Creative New Zealand invests \$250,000 per year in the Screen Innovation Production Fund.

Appendix 5: Screen Innovation Production Fund

Over the past six years, minutes from the SIPF assessment committee meetings note that documentaries represent a disproportionately large number of the applications. Overall, they make up 34 per cent of the projects that have received funding.

A number of documentary films supported by the Screen Innovation Production Fund have achieved local and international success.

Screen Innovation Production Fund grants: 2001/02 to 2006/07*

Year	Applications	Grants offered	Documentary grants
2001/02	190	35	10
2002/03	236	35	13
2003/04	185	34	10
2004/05	197	36	10
2005/06	242	44	19
2006/07	222	36	13
Total	1272	220	75*

* Includes six grants for duplication costs of documentaries totalling \$6,261

Screen Innovation Production Fund: documentary projects offered grants

Year	Name	Project title	\$ amount	Time to Complete App.
2001/02	Hitendra Patel	Children of Zion	12,483	1 yr 3 m
2001/02	Justina Frost	Travel Notes	13,715	1 yr 2 m
2001/02	Sandor Lau	Behaviour of the Backpacker in NZ	10,826	1 yr 4 m
2001/02	Trinity Pictures Ltd	Knights of the East	23,860	3 y 8 m
2001/02	Gregory King	A Place Where People Go to Die	24,695	Extension 30 June 2008
2001/02	Loops and Samples	Loops and Samples	20,000	5 y 8 m
2001/02	Florian Habicht	Kaikohu Demolition	7,409	2 y 9 m
2001/02	Andrei Jewell	Riversong	15,000	Default

				Client
2001/02	Wintergarden Productions	The Andy Leleisi'uao Project	3,882	11 m
2001/02	Julian McCarthy	Light in the Dark - Alan Taylor Artist & Art	11,835	2 y 2 m
2002/03	Martin Rumsby	Theo Schoon	21,550	Default client
2002/03	Stuart Page	Shustak	16,947	Extension 6 August 2008
2002/03	Mandrika Rupa	Taamara/Sangam (A joining of two peoples)	9,085	9 m
2002/03	Paul Judge	Colour and Ritual: The Art of Don Driver	5,920	Default
2002/03	Bridget Sutherland	Far Off Town	23,500	3 y 6 m
2002/03	Gretchen Mornin	Hearth	9,482	1 y 8 m
2002/03	Briar March	Allie Eagle And Me	7,500	1 y 2 m
2002/03	Jumping Dog Pictures	Frodo is Great ...Who is That!	14,000	1 y 8 m
2002/03	Summer Agnew	Minginui	16,847	1 y 9 m
2002/03	Roshni Films	Edie & the Women	25,300	5 y 3 m
2002/03	Michelle McGregor	Hone Tuwhare	9,472	2 y 2 m
2002/03	Patrick Bronte	Nga Toa - Reflections on Sacrifice	7,500	3 y 2 m
2003/04	Lovelyhouse Productions Ltd	Colin, Martin and Sue	4,460	11m
2003/04	Luke Wheeler	Not Too Bad	15,000	2 y 8 m
2003/04	Errol Wright	21st Century Land Wars	13,000	10 m
2003/04	Elizabeth Pollock	Atlantis Approaching	15,000	2 y 1 m
2003/04	Orlando Clairmont	From The Outside Looking In	19,000	3 y 8 m
2003/04	Juliette Veber	Emergency House	19,523	3 y 4 m
2003/04	Alex Monteith	No Stranger	17,000	2 y 3 m
2003/04	Peter Wells	Friendship is the Harbour of Joy	10,055	2 m
2003/04	Mel Johnston	Buy Now, Pay Later	15,000	retired
2003/04	Gillian Ashurst	Rocket Men and Space Cadets	20,000	1 y 5 m
2004/05	Simon Price	Pakeha Family	19,488	extension September 2009
2004/05	Dean Hapeta	Ngatahi - Know the Links #3	10,000	1 y 8 m
2004/05	Chris Todd	Journey to Japan	6,000	1 m 2 w
2004/05	Andrew Moore	Skatopia 78	10,000	film screened waiting

				report
2004/05	Florian Habicht	A Day in the Life of New Zealand	31,475	default
2004/05	Pocket String Pictures	Graffiti Project	3,600	1 y 2 m
2004/05	Errol Wright	The Last Resort	24,334	1 y 8 m
2004/05	Briar March	Night to Day	11,000	extension
2004/05	Peter B Bell	Destiny in Motion	14,410	2 y 1 m
2004/05	Sandor Lau	Squeegee Men	24,000	2 y 1 m
2005/06	Paul Janman	The Formal Solution	15,000	extension
2005/06	Hayden Campbell Productions Ltd	The Zoo	5,000	3 y 1 m
2005/06	Matthew Leonard	Tutira	20,539	extension
2005/06	Claudia Babirat	Home Brew	10,450	1 y 4 m
2005/06	Orlando Stewart	Ed Gains: Can Music...	14,985	extension
2005/06	Simon Burgin	In the Night Kitchen	3,000	1 y 5 m
2005/06	Suspect Productions	What's with the ***** Zombies?	17,851	1 y 2 m
2005/06	Jim Lederman	The Fantasy Cliffs	4,025	5 m
2005/06	Alister Barry	A Civilised Society	25,000	1 y 1 m
2005/06	Bridget Sutherland	Far Off Town copyright	5,000	1 y 1 m
2005/06	Claudia Pond Eyley	Departure/Return	15,000	8 m
2005/06	Robin Greenberg	Huloo	21,165	not due
2005/06	Susan Potter	The Defence Rests	10,213	not due
2005/06	Mandrika Rupa	Varasda	3,280	7 m
2005/06	Dean Hapeta	Post Production #4	10,000	9 m
2005/06	Kathy Dudding	The Return	15,000	11 m
2005/06	Robyn Venables	The Knowledge Box	18,359	1 y 9 m
2006/07	Marie Russell	Salisbury Garden Court	14,063	not due
2006/07	Tom Reilly	Gordonia	22,150	not due
2006/07	Vix Pix Productions	The Seeds that Bind us	21,000	not due
2006/07	Gerard Smyth	Water, Water	24,680	not due
2006/07	James Frankham	Waka Moana	24,650	not due
2006/07	Big Girls Blouse	Through Rainbow Coloured Glass	22,180	not due
2006/07	On the Level Productions	Elegy of an Island: the takuu story	25,000	not due
2006/07	Jan Steffen	The Godmachine	24,586	not due
2006/07	Sandy Crichton	Karearea: The Pine Falcon	15,000	not due
2006/07	Luke Wheeler	West Life or Stunt Corp	22,500	not due

Screen Innovation Production Fund: documentary projects offered duplication grants

	Year	Name	Project title	\$ amount
1	2002/03	Dean Hapeta	VHS copies of rapumentary	870
2	2005/06	Sandor Lau	Squeegee Bandit	1,500

3	2005/06	Michelle McGregor	Hone Tuwhare - The Return Home	1,500
4	2006/07	Jessica Feast	Cowboys & Communists	750
5	2006/07	Sophie Zhang	So far yet so close	750
6	2006/07	Roseanne Liang	Banana in a Nutshell DVD	891

THEMES

Consistent themes emerge from minutes of the 2001/02 to 2006/07 assessment meetings.

- A consistently high percentage of documentary proposals have been coming to the rounds for funding.
- Several documentary project proposals in recent funding rounds have been based overseas with little or no relevance to New Zealand/ers. Two projects recommended in the October 2006 round have strong Pacific connections.
- More recent documentary proposals are intended to be feature length but lack the story structure and detail to prove they can be sustained for the duration.
- A constant source of tension for the assessment panel is its belief that some projects could fit into the mainstream but that television is commissioning very few projects at the innovative or high ends of documentary making. As a result, SIPF has become the only funding source for many documentary filmmakers.
- Many documentary projects are “excellent” but lack innovation.
- There is a difference between documentary as a genre and documenting for archival purposes (e.g. the recording of New Zealand poets). Archival documenting may warrant its own fund.

HISTORICAL COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN SIPF PARTNERS AND OTHER FUNDING BODIES

(a) **TVNZ and NZ On Air**

TVNZ was an equal financial partner in the predecessor to the SIPF, the Creative Film and Video Fund from 1988–1992, contributing between \$145,000 and \$160,000 a year. NZ On Air was also an equal financial partner in 1995 and 1996, contributing \$185,000 a year. Support was withdrawn because the Fund did not provide a sufficient broadcast outcome.

(b) **Documentary fellowship**

A documentary fellowship was established as a one-year pilot in 1992, funded jointly by NZ On Air and TVNZ with an agreement to support each project on an individual basis. Later, TVNZ’s position changed to a forward financial commitment for three years, subject to an ongoing commitment from the other parties. Agreement could not be reached and the initiative was discontinued in 1994.

(c) **Case-by-case collaboration with NZ On Air**

In 1997, the CEOs of Creative New Zealand and NZFC make a commitment to getting projects broadcast with a view to bringing NZ On Air back into SIPF. In 1998, NZ On Air agreed to work on a case-by-case basis. Two projects with SIPF at that time had a broadcast outcome. *Other*, a series of short films, was allocated \$30,000 by NZ On Air and \$20,000 by SIPF. Another project, *rADz*, was supported by SIPF but not NZ On Air. However, TV3 agreed to broadcast this and subsequent series.