

**Jane Wrightson**

**From:** berys, walter [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 December 2011 9:25 p.m.  
**To:** Jane Wrightson  
**Subject:** FW: NZ On Air-funded Documentary Inside Child Poverty

Hi Jane

Thanks – copy for your information.

Cheers, Neil.

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**From:** berys, walter [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 December 2011 9:24 p.m.  
**To:** [REDACTED] Alastair Bell  
**Subject:** RE: NZ On Air-funded Documentary Inside Child Poverty

Dear Mr Bell

Thank you for your email message of 6 December concerning the recent "Inside New Zealand" documentary on child poverty.

I understand and appreciate your concern about the scheduling of NZ On Air-funded programme on a significant campaign issue just days before the general election. However, we categorically reject the suggestion that New Zealand On Air was in any way involved in the broadcaster's decision to screen the programme at that time.

The documentary "Inside Child Poverty" was approved for New Zealand On Air funding in June 2011 as a programme by an award-winning documentary maker on a topical and challenging social issue. Once NZ On Air makes a funding decision we are precluded by the Broadcasting Act from being involved in editorial content. Responsibility for this lies with the producer and the broadcaster. The subjects and content of the documentaries we fund are diverse – and often controversial – and we encourage the exploration of ideas and issues. As a rule we do not see programmes before they are screened. If anyone has a complaint about the content or balance of a programme they may of course raise it with the broadcaster and, if necessary, the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

On the scheduling of the programme just days out from a general election (when the topic had indeed become a significant campaign issue), I fully share your concern. NZ On Air did not become aware of the screening schedule until TV3's programme schedules were published a few days beforehand. We were concerned that this decision put at risk our record of, and reputation for, political neutrality. Our Chief Executive wrote immediately to the Chief Executive of TV3 to register our serious concern. Our Board subsequently reinforced our unhappiness with the scheduling decision when we met with the Chief Executive of TV3 and the TV3 Programme Manager on 8 December.

This is the first time that NZ On Air has been let down by a broadcaster in this way. NZ On Air has traditionally refrained from involving itself in scheduling decisions – and to my knowledge has never felt it necessary to do so. TV3 has expressed its regret for having put us in this situation and has assured us that there will be no repeat of the problem. We are nevertheless investigating options to strengthen our broadcast covenants against the recurrence of such an incident.

I can assure you that, as a Crown agency, we take very seriously our responsibility to remain politically neutral.

Thank you for contacting me.

Neil Walter  
Chair

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