

23 December 2011

Sussan Turner  
Managing Director  
MediaWorks  
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Auckland 1150

Dear Sussan

As the Board discussed with you at their meeting this month, NZ On Air was unhappy with TV3's decision to screen the Child Poverty documentary just a few days before the general election. Although we were not party to the scheduling decision, we now stand accused of political bias.

NZ On Air takes its reputation for political impartiality very seriously - and we put a lot of effort into maintaining that reputation. In the past broadcasters have displayed a high level of understanding of our concern to avoid reputational damage.

As you know, NZ On Air does not involve itself in the editorial content of programmes. We wish to continue supporting independent documentaries on important social and political issues in New Zealand, notwithstanding that they may prove controversial.

The Board has asked me to explore with you ways in which we could avoid a repetition of this situation, based on some form of understanding that due account will in future be taken of our concern not to be pulled into the political arena in this way. One suggestion is that any proposal to screen a politically sensitive programme in the period immediately before a general or by-election first be discussed with NZ On Air. The period concerned is probably best defined as between the issue of writs and the day of voting.

We should be grateful for your comments on this proposal.

Yours sincerely

  
Jane Wrightson  
Chief Executive