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**New Zealand Television:  
What are the benefits of state ownership  
of television in a commercial world?**

**The Public Service Broadcasting  
debate continues ...**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
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## Abstract

Faced with the possible sale of our free-to-air state broadcaster Television New Zealand to overseas media interests, this thesis argues a firm case against sale, and sets out to create further public interest and comment. Television is valuable more for its programme content than its ability to raise revenue. Starting with the premise that television has a unique role as a mass communications medium in creating social reality, discussion centres on how ideas of cultural identity, democracy, sovereignty, and national identity are articulated and supported through locally-made, creative and diverse programming; and how this is strengthened in having the state broadcaster take a leading part in setting a high standard in the service provided. The tensions created by economic globalisation of media products are examined, especially in relation to how small nation-states such as New Zealand encounter a deterritorialisation of social identity arising through rapid technological advances and media processes which ignore national state and cultural boundaries.

The origin of state television in New Zealand is documented, particular emphasis being given to legislative control, financial performance and the effect that organisational structure has on the content, diversity and standard of programmes scheduled. Maximising the financial performance of TVNZ through saturation advertising is questioned, and the recent polarising debate by politicians, commentators, and the public on the merits or otherwise of state ownership of TVNZ is covered in detail. A comprehensive study of the ABC and SBS in Australia is included, which informs an alternative proposal for TVNZ based on significant restructuring.

This thesis concludes TVNZ should be retained in government ownership, but with TV1 guided by a charter which moves its prime function away from commercial imperatives. TV1 should concentrate on developing a broadcasting service dedicated to programmes which contribute a sense of national identity, and which reflect the cultural diversity and aspirations of all New Zealanders. To assist in these goals TV1 would be publicly funded to provide daily prime-time ad-free 'windows' used to schedule programmes in line with its charter. TV2, and a range of industry mechanisms, would be used to ameliorate the ratio of tax-payer funding.

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