

# Is mass-branded local identity oxymoronic? An historical perspective on radio regulation and ownership in Aotearoa New Zealand

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## Abstract

*In this paper, I conduct an historical examination of the nature of local radio ownership and regulation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Currently much of local radio is mass-branded and privately owned by a foreign-owned corporate oligopoly of two major networks: Mediaworks and The Radio Network. Yet, local provincial radio has a diverse history of change through successive government policy and regulation. Radio began under private ownership. The state then took control and ownership of private radio. Private radio broadcasting licences were not allowed to be issued until the 1970s. Following the 1980s, deregulation and privatisation occurred. By examining a history of provincial radio broadcasting in Aotearoa New Zealand I uncover the various regulatory frameworks between the 1920s and the 1990s that have contributed to the development of local radio where the majority of its ownership is represented today through homogeneous, networked brands.*

**Keywords:** Local radio, ownership, regulation, deregulation, privatisation, broadcasting legislation, Radio New Zealand, Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## Introduction

This paper historicises the present de/regulation, ownership, and the subsequent identity of local radio. Aotearoa New Zealand has one of the most deregulated radio markets in the world, contingent on successive changes in government policy (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). Private ownership was at 30% in 1988 just before deregulation (Ministry of Commerce, 1997). Throughout the 1980s, radio became less of a state service and more of an asset ready to be privatised. Under an ethos of neoliberal politics, the Fourth Labour and Fourth National Governments legislated for deregulation and privatisation. The State Owned Enterprises Act (1986) transformed Radio New Zealand (RNZ) into a profit-driven company, ready for sale. New radio frequencies were made available for tender (Radiocommunications Act, 1989). The Broadcasting Act (1989) removed advertising-free Sundays. The Broadcasting Amendment Act (1991) enabled 100% foreign ownership of

broadcasting. By 1993, 74% of radio stations were owned privately (Ministry of Commerce, 1997). Such changes enabled local state radio stations to be marketed under homogenous brands where, for example, the contemporary structure of breakfast programming with personalities is “extremely normalised across stations and markets” (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005, p. 38).

Today, much of local radio is produced as mass-branded identities, operating under foreign ownership of a “near duopoly” (Johnstone, 2005, p. 47). Radio New Zealand’s commercial arm was sold for \$89 million in 1996 to a consortium consisting of Independent News and Media, based in Ireland and owned by Tony O’Reilly, and Clear Channel US which operates in 40 countries (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). The Radio Network, formerly the commercial and community stations arm of RNZ, includes brands such as Classic Hits, NewstalkZB, Radio Sport, Radio Hauraki, and ZM. The Radio Network is now a subsidiary of the Australian Radio Network, owned by Clear Communications in the United States and APN News and Media in Australia (The Radio Network, n.d. c). Mediaworks, the other major radio industry player is owned by Ironbridge Capital an Australian company that took over from the Canadian-owned company CanWest (Mediaworks, n.d.). It owns branded networks such as MORE FM, The Breeze, RadioLIVE, Solid Gold, The Edge, and The Rock.

Programming by media networks is driven by the need of advertisers to target specific demographics of consumers, rather than the audience (Hoynes, 2002). Classic Hits describes its stations: “appealing to 25-54 year olds, the Classic Hits audience is rich with household shoppers ... a must for any advertising mix” (The Radio Network, n.d. a). MORE FM programming is another example of demographically-targeted advertising: “an adult music format that targets the 25-44 year old female – your true household shopper” (Canwest Mediaworks, n.d.).

Many of these mass-branded networks are marketed as local radio stations where local radio as a mass-branded, market-driven identity has become a reality in New Zealand’s towns and cities. Most of these branded stations are promoted through websites that enable listeners to select their own region. However, when a region is selected, most content appears to be uniform across websites with the exception of listings of local events and/or regional weather information. Classic Hits promotes its own breakfast programming as local: “breakfast team is an integral part of your local community - entertaining and updating locals with happenings and events” (The Radio Network, n.d. b). Outside of 6 am-10 am, programming is networked from Auckland, but computer technology enables local advertising and local weather announcements to be transmitted in time-limited slots throughout the day. MORE FM is also another example of local radio as part of a market-driven mass-brand:

MORE FM is live, local and parochial 7 days a week ... MORE FM broadcasts in 21 centres throughout Aotearoa New Zealand with local announcers and a strong promotional presence in every market. Interaction with the community is an integral

part of MORE FM. Each and every MORE FM throughout the country is positioned as the *only true local radio station in town*. (Canwest Mediaworks, n.d., italics added).

## Method

This paper aims to offer an historical perspective that contextualises how radio in Aotearoa New Zealand developed to the point of consolidated, mass branded identity.

Principal data collection consisted of the analysis of historical documents. This included a wide reading of a range of broadcasting publications including the *Radio Record*, the *New Zealand Listener*, and examining governmental documentation such as *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Acts of Parliament (from 1903 to 1995), and gazetted governmental regulations. In examining these documents, I looked for emergent shifts of policy and debate of regulation and ownership that produced structural changes in local radio broadcasting. Additionally, quantitative data from the *Radio Record* (published 1927-32) and the *New Zealand Listener* was collected through a collation of private- and state-owned radio stations, along with their locations, over time. A count of state- and private-owned radio stations provided quantitative data that supplemented the genealogy. Unfortunately in 2000 the *New Zealand Listener* ceased publication of radio stations in operation, limiting the quantitative part of this study. Rural and provincial radio stations were selected, excluding the four main centres: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

In examining a history of radio, I found that 'local' stations such as MORE FM and Classic Hits belonged to networks that were once uniquely local radio stations with much local programming and distinctiveness that was characteristic of their communities (see Appendix). However, due to successive Centre-Left and Centre-Right governments through New Zealand's history, there were complex changes in government policy and regulation that greatly transformed the nature of local radio broadcasting. In this paper I begin by examining the emergence of private radio in the 1920s, its buyout by the State, and look at emergences of local programming. I then outline the progressive liberalisation of radio from the 1970s onwards with the eventual deregulation and privatisation of local radio following the neoliberal reforms of the Fourth Labour and National Governments.

## Emergence of private radio under state regulation

Early on, the New Zealand Government was well aware of the potential for wireless transmissions, which it aimed to tightly regulate. The New Zealand Wireless Telegraphy Act (1903) passed before the British and the Australian equivalents of 1904 and 1905,

respectively, was hailed as “the first of its kind in the world” (Day 1994, p. 13). The Wireless Telegraphy Act (1903) consisted of four clauses that gave the government the sole right to receive and transmit messages by wireless telegraphy and to establish radio stations for that purpose. It also stated that any person who erected, constructed, or established any station for receiving or transmitting without obtaining government consent was liable to maximum fine of £500 as well as forfeiture of their equipment.

Later, the government passed a new bill on broadcasting – the Post and Telegraph Amendment Act (1924). This new Act stated that it was illegal for any person to sell any plant, machinery, instruments, or other apparatus to designed and intended to be used in connection with wireless telegraphy, “unless he [sic] is the holder of a dealer’s license” (Post and Telegraphy Amendment Act, 1924, s. 5, ss. 1). The Post and Telegraph Amendment Act (1927) gave the Governor-General authority to establish broadcasting stations, and the Post and Telegraph Act (1928) gave the responsibility for granting licences to a minister in charge of broadcasting.

Although radio was tightly regulated, it was private radio that was first established from 1925 onwards. The Radio Broadcasting Company (RBC) was a private company established in 1925 (Day, 1994). The RBC (which represented all private locally-owned stations in the 1920s and 1930s) asked the government in 1925 if it would contract its broadcasting services to the company. The government finally agreed and the RBC became a private contractor to the government. Between 1925 and 1928, three rural stations were established: 2YM Gisborne, 2YF Palmerston North and 2ZK Wanganui (Day, 1994). In 1928, the moderately-Left United-Labour Coalition Government took over the Centre-Right Reform Government and encouraged the RBC to expand its operation dramatically with the launch of twenty-three radio stations between 1928 and 1932. Small provincial stations were included in this burst of activity: 2ZP in Wairoa in 1930, 4ZR in Inchclutha in 1931, and 4ZC in Cromwell in 1932 (Day, 1994).

## **Labour: Nationalisation and state monopolisation**

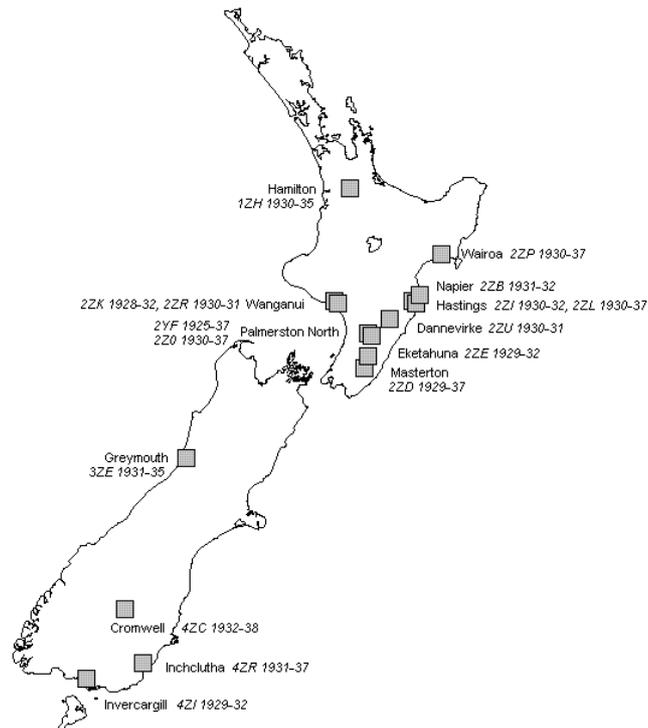
The next major emergence in regulation and policy occurred in the 1930s, as a political discourse supporting a more centralised broadcasting policy took hold. By 1931 broadcasting was no longer seen as a novel pursuit. Subsequently, private radio was threatened by a change in government policy. The Reform Party came back in coalition with the United Party in a new government and began to regulate. The Broadcasting Act (1931) established the New Zealand Broadcasting Board (NZBB). The Act gave the Board the authority to take over existing stations. The Board could now acquire any broadcast stations and assets from the RBC in accordance with a new agreement between the minister and the Company (Broadcasting Act, 1931, s.16, ss.1). The RBC was dissolved and its assets were transferred to the new NZBB.

The First Labour Government, in 1935, intensified pressures for regulation, seeking to create a unified, state-owned and highly regulated broadcasting system. It attempted to quash the private radio broadcasters, often called the 'B-stations', by limiting their ability to generate revenue by selling advertising. The Broadcasting Amendment Act (1934-35) stated that no advertising intended for the "pecuniary benefit of any person shall be transmitted from any broadcasting station ... and ... no licences from the Board shall be issued" (Broadcasting Amendment Act, 1934-35, s. 7). The then Labour Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, was well aware of the power of broadcasting: "We have promised that the B stations will live ... but I never said they would have advertising rights" (Downes & Harcourt, 1976, p. 100). *The Scandal of New Zealand Broadcasting*, a pamphlet published in the 1ZB Radio Club, attacked the Labour government for its negative discrimination of the private stations: "Radio broadcasting should be a possession of the people, but it has been made the tool of a monopoly" (Hall, 1980, p.77).

Then, in 1936, nearly all of the private broadcasting stations had either been dissolved or taken over by the Labour government and the emergence of the Broadcasting Act (1936) dissolved the NZBB and transferred responsibility to the Minister of Broadcasting. To discourage the future growth of private stations, the Minister was to provide an additional alternative public service for every locality that was served by a commercial station (Broadcasting Act, 1936, s. 14, ss. 3). The Minister was to eliminate from private stations "any programme or part of a programme which in his opinion is unsuitable for broadcasting" (Broadcasting Act, 1936, s. 15). In addition, the Act restricted transfers of licenses for private broadcast stations so that no licensee of a private station could "... assign, sublet, transfer or otherwise dispose of, or permit any other person to participate in, the benefit of his license" (Broadcasting Act, 1936, s. 17, ss. 1).

As a result of the new broadcasting legislation, 16 private radio stations were forced to shut down, some within a decade from when they were established (see Figure 1). Sixteen was a substantial number of radio stations in the 1930s given that broadcasting had only begun, most were concentrated in the lower North Island, proximal to the government in Wellington.<sup>1</sup> The result of the 1936 legislation was a state monopoly of radio broadcasting.

The dramatic change in radio in the 1930s was followed by a long period of steady growth of radio stations until the 1960s when National came into power. The 20 years of National government (1949–1972, with a break of three years of Labour in 1957–1960) left broadcasting comparatively undisturbed and operating under state monopoly (Downes & Harcourt, 1976).



**Figure 1:** First private local provincial radio stations disestablished in New Zealand (due to the change in government policy to nationalise radio). (Sources: *New Zealand Listener* and *The Radio Record*).

A more cohesive construction of identity began across Aotearoa New Zealand’s provincial areas through radio. The National Programme began operation in 1964 with the networking of non-commercial (‘Y’) stations from Wellington as process of rationalisation as had happened in other countries (Downes & Harcourt, 1976). Although this met with objection from other places, opposition disappeared after it was realised that there was much leeway for local breakouts. Although there was an increasing trend towards a unification of programming, the emergence of local programming also arose. Many provincial stations began to produce local programming in addition to playing jazz and classical music, imported from the United Kingdom. With the advent of disc jockeys local identities emerged with local requests at 7pm such as 2XA Wanganui’s ‘Tip Top Tunes’, 2XN ‘Nelson’s Hit Parade’, and 2XP ‘Taranaki’s Popularity Parade’ (*New Zealand Listener*, 23 March 1960). Local rural programming also appeared with ‘Pig Talk’ on 1YZ Rotorua, with musings from the Bay of Plenty District Pig Council and farming advice on ‘Bay of Plenty Country Journal’. The commercial stations, also known as community stations, placed more emphasis on their local roles (Day, 2000).

During the early 1970s, the construction of place through radio became even more localised with provincial radio increasingly attending to surrounding communities. For example, 3ZC Timaru broadcast local programmes focusing on particular areas of South Canterbury such as ‘Mainly for the MacKenzie’ and ‘Calling Waimate’, 2ZP Taranaki broadcast ‘Out Waitara

Way', and 'Stratford Showcase', while 2ZN Nelson focused on Stoke, Tahunanui, Richmond, and Motueka (*New Zealand Listener*, 17 January 1972). Local identities and a sense of community ownership of local radio emerged. As one anonymous radio reviewer put it:

The Community Network stations really do serve the local community, particularly in smaller centres such as Tauranga, where the Saturday morning sports session, for instance, includes a good deal of detailed information about the composition of teams, venues, and prospects. The local shopkeepers, too, advertise in a very personal sort of manner, which reinforces the community feeling. It is, of course much harder to create that same kind of feeling through a radio station in Auckland or Wellington where one is talking not to a relatively homogenous single community but rather to a group of communities separated geographically, economically, culturally, and racially. (*New Zealand Listener*, 19 August, 1978, p. 67)

The national state broadcasting service transformed into a more business-like New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) due to the then National government's philosophy on tight fiscal management. The NZBC was in the unusual position of being under obligation to provide a programming service while having to "... compete for advertising revenue essential to the maintenance and extension of that service" (New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1969, p. 1). However, extending NZBC services, such as radio, to remote areas was secondary to competing against other media for advertising revenue and the NZBC excused itself from expanding provincial coverage. Although the NZBC was to "...develop, extend and improve its service in the public interest" (Broadcasting Corporation Act, 1961, s. 10, ss. 2) the Corporation argued that the amount of technical funding available for coverage was "...declining as saturation is approached" (New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, 1969, p. 2). It acknowledged that only large districts had a local radio station but limitations would remain in establishing new stations. The NZBC was a government controlled monopoly which did not encourage private broadcasting (Blackburn, 1974; Rennie, 1990). It had the power to grant warrants for private stations under the Broadcasting Corporation Act (1961) but it did not.

## Early emergences of liberalisation

The Private Broadcasting Stations (Ownership) Regulations (1969) along with the Broadcasting Authority Act (1968) made way for private AM radio station licence applications under the National government as a result of political pressure (see Blackburn, 1974 on Radio Hauraki). However, there were restrictions. For example, no person was to have a prescribed interest (i.e., be the holder or shareholder) in "...more than one warrant for a medium-frequency private broadcasting station in New Zealand" (The Private

Broadcasting Stations (Ownership) Regulations, 1969, s. 5, p. 1217). Nonetheless, no private provincial radio stations were established.

Broadcasting was in for a shake-up as Roger Douglas was appointed as Minister of Broadcasting in 1972 under Norman Kirk's Labour government. Douglas' view on broadcasting was that it should be liberalised so that it could run autonomously without any direct government intervention. The Broadcasting Act (1973) split the NZBC into three independent competing organisations: Television Service One, Television Service Two and Radio New Zealand (RNZ). It also established the Broadcasting Council which acted as an administrative 'umbrella' for the three corporations. The increased autonomy of broadcasting meant in theory that rural areas would benefit more with increased coverage and an increase in the likelihood of private radio establishing itself. However, no state-owned radio expanded its coverage, and only one established private station expanded its service into a rural community. 1XX Radio Bay of Plenty, established in 1973 in Whakatane and in 1974 in Murupara, was the first local private rural radio station to be established since Labour abolished private broadcasting in the 1930s.

The Third Labour's Government's policy to maintain state ownership in public broadcasting prevailed over Douglas' radical philosophy on liberalisation and autonomy. No person was to have an interest in "...more than one warrant for a private broadcasting station" (The Private Broadcasting (Ownership) Regulations, 1975, s. 5, p. 172). The regulations were made because in 1974, Radio Otago, a company which used to own a network of private radio stations in the 1990s but was then bought by Canwest, applied for a licence fee to operate a private station in Oamaru. That application was turned down by the Labour government (see New Zealand Parliament, 1973, pp. 4075–4076). At the same time, state-owned Radio New Zealand decided to begin to network its nine provincial stations, initially from 7 pm to 11 pm daily to save costs (New Zealand Parliament, 1973).

The Third National government took over from Labour in 1976, accusing Labour of a bloated public broadcasting system. Robert Muldoon had a plan to merge the unwieldy TV1, TV2 and RNZ back into a single framework called the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand (BCNZ) through the Broadcasting Act (1976). He was scathing of the Labour government's broadcasting model and critical of the former National government's bloated NZBC: "Roger Douglas was responsible for the broadcasting fiasco which destroyed the NZBC and put in its place three corporations which were financially unsound and operationally unacceptable to the public" (Muldoon, 1977, p. 80).

Concerned about the bureaucracy of the BCNZ (Muldoon 1977), the Muldoon regime decided to begin to liberalise private broadcasting by replacing the Broadcasting Council with a Broadcasting Tribunal and allow FM radio (Day, 2000). By 1986, there were three private local broadcasters: 1KCC FM in Northland broadcasting to Whangarei, Kaitia and Kaikohe, 1XX Whakatane, and 4XA Radio Otago in Central Otago broadcasting to Alexandra, Queenstown and Wanaka (see Royal Commission of Inquiry, 1986, pp. 251–252). Another 17 private commercial stations emerged, based in the major cities.

## Deregulation and privatisation

The broadcasting climate changed once more in 1984, as neoliberal reforms in the Fourth Labour Government's policy dominated the airwaves. Under the Labour Government of David Lange, Richard Prebble, Minister of Broadcasting, radically changed the face of Radio New Zealand making it a state owned enterprise (SOE). The principal objectives of the State Owned Enterprises Act (1986) were for the enterprise to be a successful business and to be:

As profitable and efficient as comparable businesses that are not owned by the Crown [and] an organisation that exhibits a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which it operates and by endeavouring to accommodate or encourage these *when able to do so*. [italics added] (State Owned Enterprises Act, 1986, s .1,ss .4).

Thus, the primary focus was on extracting as much surplus as possible and only looking after the interests of the community 'when able to do so'. With this in mind, RNZ became more commercially oriented in its provincial community stations. State owned enterprises were established so that the government could potentially sell them off to recover debt. The sale of Radio 4ZG in Gore was such a test. The station, which began in 1980, had had cutbacks in staff and hours of broadcast so that, in 1988, its local hours were reduced to four hours a day and then it was networked (Welch, 1995). The sale of 4ZG was "...an experiment by RNZ to test the waters for a complete sell-off of commercial stations" (Welch, 1995, p. 22).

However as word spread that Douglas and Prebble were preparing to deregulate radio, private broadcasters took this to their advantage and set up 'test' stations from short-term licenses. These new short-term stations were generally broadcasting over the summer periods. The first of these were 2XX and 2XC Horowhenua Coast Radio in Kapiti, Radio Fifeshire in Nelson, and Peak FM (Energy FM) in New Plymouth transmitting over the summers from 1983 to 1986 (source: *New Zealand Listener*).

The Labour broadcasting reforms of 1989 created deregulation and sowed the seed for privatisation of state provincial radio in Aotearoa New Zealand. From 1990, there is clear evidence that the Radiocommunications Act (1989), which allowed the tendering of radio frequencies, and the Broadcasting Act (1989), which abolished the Broadcasting Tribunal and deregulated broadcasting, significantly accelerated the growth of privately-owned provincial radio stations (see Figures 2 and 3). This was to the detriment of state-owned local radio. Provincial radio stations and transmitters grew exponentially from this deregulation. In 1988 there were 80 provincial radio transmitters, by 1995 there were 194 such stations, and by 2000 there were 401 transmitting<sup>2</sup>.

The National party came back into power in 1990 and continued with Labour's neoliberal reforms of state asset privatisation. The Fourth National Government was pressured by TV3 (in receivership) to increase foreign ownership of the company so that it would not go

bankrupt (Day, 2000). The government subsequently made the decision to increase to foreign ownership to 100% in television and radio through the Broadcasting Amendment Act (1991). Then, the Radio New Zealand (No. 2) Bill was developed by the National government to privatise RNZ's local commercial and community stations.

The emergence of the Radio New Zealand (No. 2) Act (1995) met with opposing debate between Labour, who wanted to keep the local stations of RNZ, and National who wanted to sell them. National rationalised selling RNZ Commercial through a neoliberalist discourse, arguing that the State should not be involved in commercial radio:

The Bill allows for the sale of the commercial arm of Radio New Zealand. Commercial radio is risky, highly competitive, and needs to be responsive to its fast-changing environment. The Government does not believe that it is appropriate for it to gamble with taxpayers' money by owning commercial stations... The commercial arm is likely to operate more profitably, and to involve less risk to taxpayers, in private ownership.

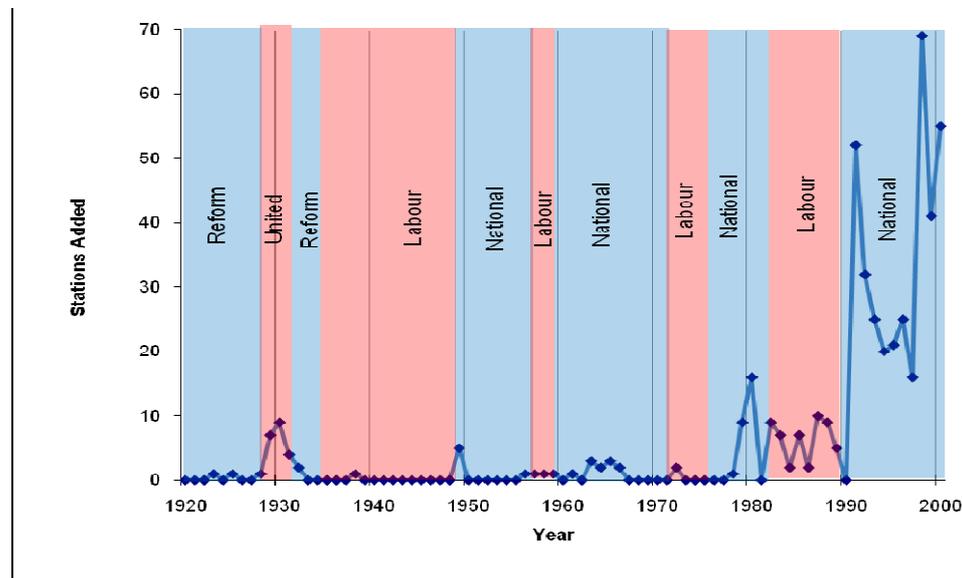
(Phillip Burdon, Minister Responsible for Radio New Zealand Ltd; New Zealand Parliament, 1995a, p. 9116)

This is great day for New Zealand. The State is finally exiting from commercial radio. No longer will the claws of the State control what people listen to on commercial radio. We will now return those radio stations to where they belong – with private enterprise, and with the people who know how to run radio stations at a profit. This will make sure that the State focuses on the things that the State can do properly, rather than on being involved in business. (Tony Ryall; New Zealand Parliament, 1995a, p. 9123)

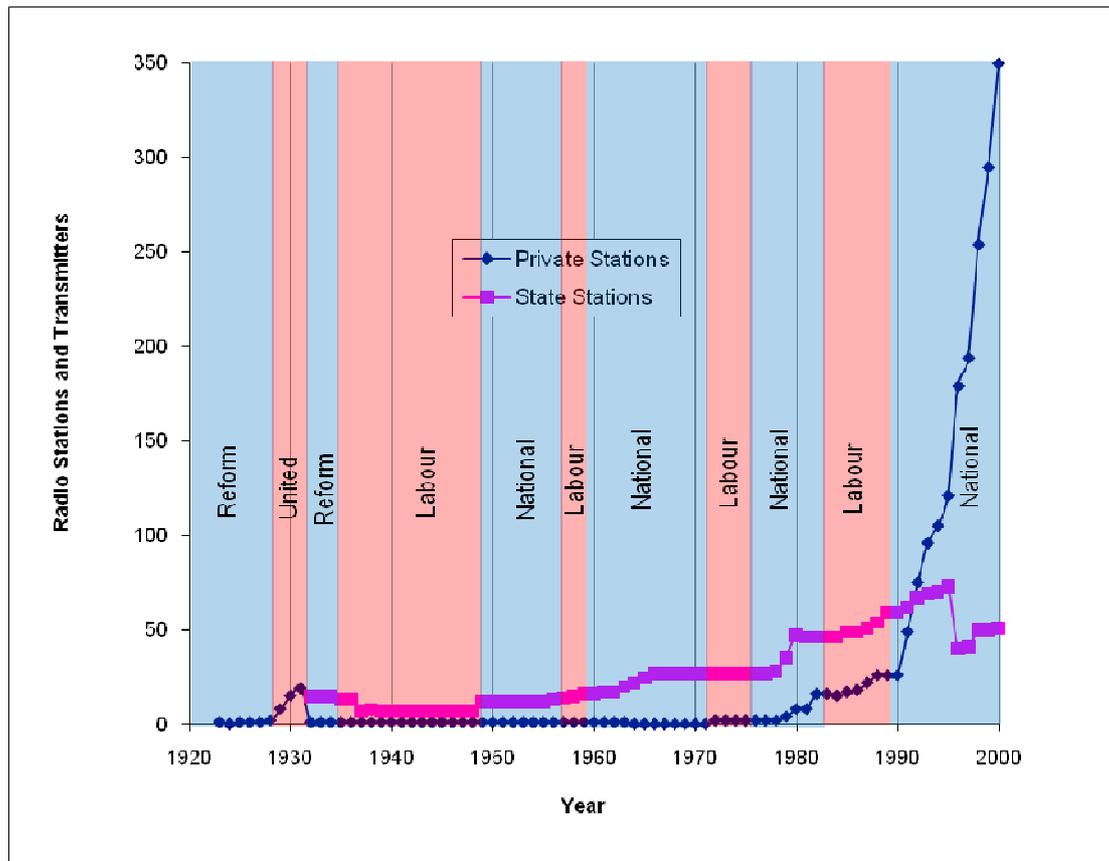
Opposing National, Labour and the Centre-Left parties argued that state ownership of RNZ Commercial enabled local, community participation. Labour argued that RNZ had “quite a good deal of local and regional content” (Rick Barker; New Zealand Parliament, 1995b, p. 8960) and that keeping its commercial arm would maintain a regional focus and input. Quoting from one of RNZ's annual reports, Martin Gallagher emphasises RNZ's social role in local radio:

Let me quote from pages 8–9 of the annual report of Radio New Zealand, dated August 1994: “As the fortunes of the market wax and wane, Radio New Zealand remains the voice of many communities throughout New Zealand. Our community stations” – please listen to this – “are the market place of many small towns and cities – the centre of communication where news and views are exchanged ... Our social role and national reach add an intangible value to the company which cannot be measured in balance sheet terms and will need to be considered in any future sale of Radio New Zealand's commercial operations.” (Martin Gallagher; New Zealand Parliament, 1995b, p. 8904)

The Radio New Zealand Act (No.2) (1995) was the last straw for state owned commercial broadcasting. RNZ's commercial wing was to be sold off through the Radio New Zealand Act (No.2) (1995) to a private consortium called The Radio Network, while its public service wing (Radio New Zealand National and Radio New Zealand Concert) was to remain in state ownership as a crown-owned entity (COE) through the Radio New Zealand Act (1995)<sup>3</sup>. The only state-owned radio transmitting today in rural and provincial Aotearoa New Zealand is Radio New Zealand National and Radio New Zealand Concert. A count of state-owned and private stations demonstrates a long period of state monopoly in broadcasting and then a sudden dramatic decline in state radio together with a sudden surge in private radio stations following Labour and National's broadcasting reforms post-1989 (see Figure 3). The result of the reforms today is a heavily privatised and deregulated radio broadcasting environment.



**Figure 2:** Growth of provincial radio stations in New Zealand 1920–2000.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 3:** Changes in state and private provincial radio stations in New Zealand 1920–2000 (includes relay stations).<sup>5</sup>

The effects of privatisation and deregulation of radio during the 1980s and 1990s has resulted in a consolidation and homogenisation of local radio stations. A large number of small owners of local radio stations existed in the mid-1990s but by 2002 there were only *two* major owner companies, TRN and CanWest, which dominate the radio industry and own the bulk of more than 300 radio frequencies (Neill & Shanahan, 2004). At present, networked stations saturate the environment where there are tensions between maintaining small amounts of local programming and having homogenous, networked programming, centralised from Auckland and aimed at pleasing advertisers (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). This almost seemingly paradoxical format of local and networked content has tended more towards a dominance of normalised, networked content, which has resulted in, as Shanahan and Duignan (2005) argue, “a loss of localism” (p. 25).

## Conclusion

Radio broadcasting in Aotearoa New Zealand has transformed from heavy state regulation to substantial deregulation. After private radio stations were allowed to flourish in the 1930s, rural and provincial radio was conveniently taken over, and owned as a state monopoly for a long time. Private radio ownership was quashed until the 1970s when it was allowed to flourish again. State radio eventually became almost fully privatised with the sale of the commercial arm of Radio New Zealand.

The function and ownership of radio has certainly changed over the years from serving communities to serving the market. For much of the 20th Century, local radio in Aotearoa New Zealand consisted mainly of state-owned stations developing their own local programming, responsive to their community. From its inception as a public service to local communities, local state radio was increasingly commercialised from the 1980s onwards, and eventually privatised. During the time of state ownership, the state appeared to view itself as a provider of a local service, receptive to the needs of the community. Today, in contrast, due to the emergence of neoliberalist policy on deregulation and privatisation in 1980s and 1990s, much of 'local' radio is foreign-owned and mass-branded for maximising advertising revenue. Although the future of local radio ownership and identity in Aotearoa New Zealand is unknown, history tells us that it has not been immune to political interference.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Only Gisborne's 2YM, which was established in 1923 remarkably lasted until 1963.

<sup>2</sup> These figures include repeater stations.

<sup>3</sup> There were bitter disputes over the sale of Radio New Zealand between National and Labour (see New Zealand Parliament 1995a,b).

<sup>4</sup> Sources: *The Radio Record*, *New Zealand Listener*, and *Day (1994)*.

<sup>5</sup> Sources: *The Radio Record*, *New Zealand Listener*, and *Day (1994)*.

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## Appendix

### **RNZ Local Commercial and Community Radio Station Identities before Privatisation and Branding**

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Classic Hits Brand	ZM Brand	Newstalk ZB Brand
Radio Northland	Christchurch ZM-FM	1ZB
Classic Hits 97FM	Wellington's ZM-FM	2ZB
Waikato's ZH FM	89.8 Kiwi FM Hamilton	3ZB
Radio BOP FM	89.8 Kiwi FM Tauranga	4ZB
Gisborne's 2ZG	Auckland's 91FM	
King Country Radio	Hawkes Bay 96FM	
Radio Waitomo	Manawatu's ZM-FM/2QQ	
Radio Forestland		
Lakeland FM		
Radio Taranaki		
Manawatu's 2ZA		
Bay City Radio		
River City Radio		
Radio Wairarapa		
Radio Marlborough		
Radio Nelson		
Radio Scenicland		
Ashburton's 3ZE		
Radio Caroline		
Radio Waitaki		
Dunedin's ZB-FM		
Southland's 4ZA		

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Note. Source: *New Zealand Listener*.