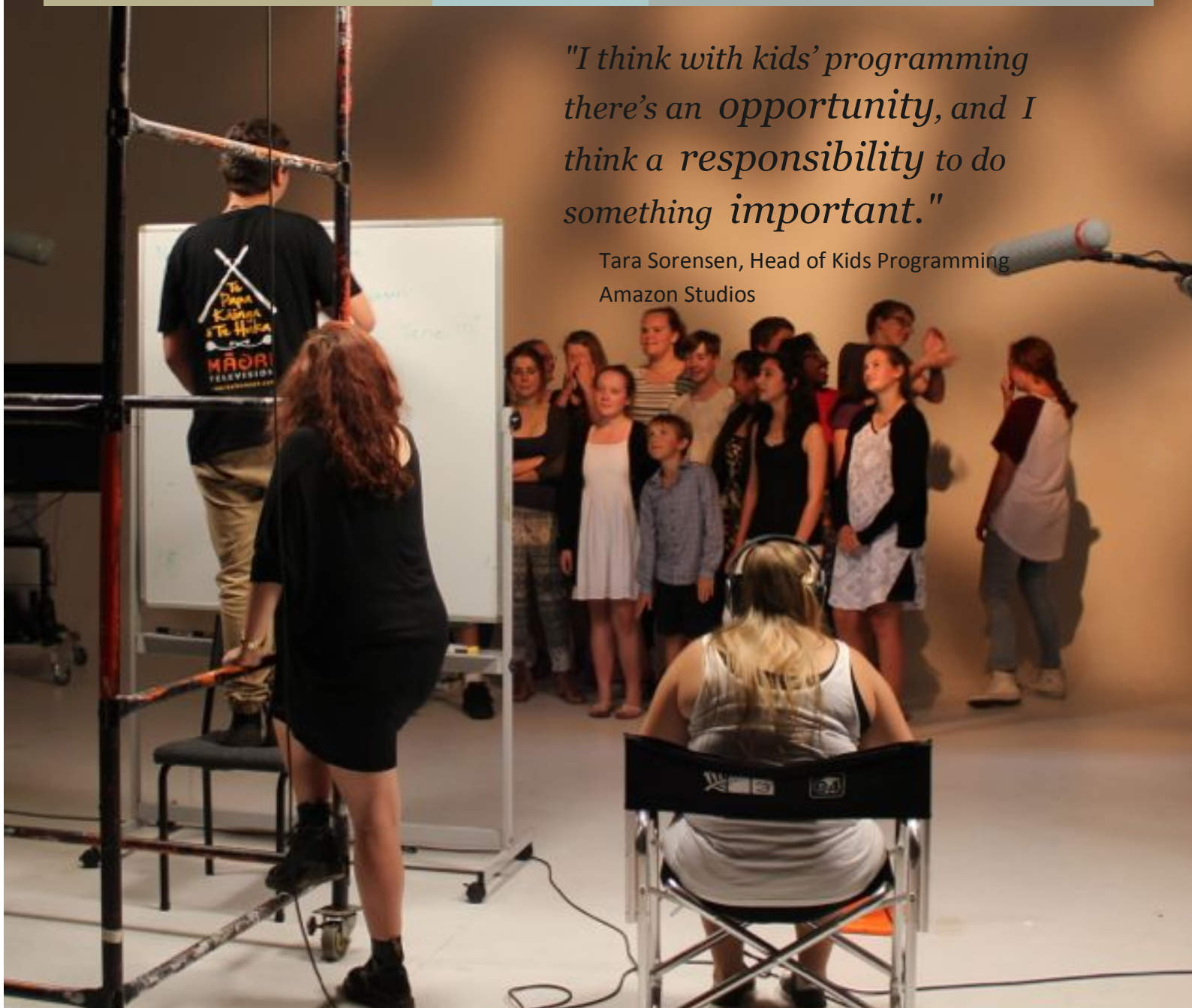


Junior Platinum

A Discussion Paper

"I think with kids' programming there's an opportunity, and I think a responsibility to do something important."

Tara Sorensen, Head of Kids Programming
Amazon Studios





In your country you can make great programs, you have made dramas that make it to the highest level of quality television worldwide. The skills are there, the creativity is there – it's all there. You just have to find a way to give it back to your children.

Dr Maya Goetz (Head of the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television)

The NZ Children's Screen trust is a registered charity dedicated to enriching children's lives through more diverse local screen content.

THE NZ CHILDREN'S SCREEN TRUST

A registered charity under the Charities Commission

The New Zealand Children's Screen Trust (NZCST) seeks to enrich the lives of New Zealand children by promoting diverse and accessible local content on all screens, facilitating more diverse international content, and by engaging with the public and industry to build a sustainable and specialised New Zealand children's screen industry.

"We hold dear our way of life. It is distinct from other countries. We want to pass on the best of it to our children so that they can make their own contribution to its development based on our values and experiences. For that to happen, children need to see and hear stories and entertainment set in their own country."

Dr Ian Hassall, NZCST Trustee

"New Zealand is uniquely poised to come up with new solutions to benefit children in the fast-changing world of digital content..."

Dr Ruth Zanker, NZCST Trustee

"This isn't just about television anymore. A series like *Girl vs Boy* that is produced for on-line delivery as well as traditional broadcast shows what can be done. We need our funding organisations to be able to look beyond broadcasters to make stuff. The world has changed and our kids are leading that change. Give them great content on the screens which they use and they will let us join them."

Ian Taylor, NZCST Trustee

NZCST has a passionate and experienced board including:

Suzy Cato, John Harris, Dr Ian Hassall, Janette Howe, Yvonne Mackay, Ian Taylor, Pieter Holl, Kate Stevenson, Dr Ruth Zanker and Tim Riley.

www.kidsonscreen.co.nz



Local children's screen content is an important and vital asset for children. It allows them to see themselves on screen, expands their imaginative horizons and shapes their ideas of who they are and who they could become.

Current funding constraints in NZ television impacts on children's programming. While NZOA spends about 20% on children's programming from its contestable fund, a static NZOA budget and a commercial broadcasting environment means that lower cost, higher volume programmes are preferred, threatening diversity on screen for kids. There is not enough drama, science, news and documentary for kids.*

"Like most of the public sector, the agency has not secured a funding increase for several years and the Board recognizes the effect on a wide range of creative enterprises." – Miriam Dean, Chair NZOA, Annual Report 2012/13

The "Platinum Fund" established in 2009 from Charter funds is the only new funding allocated to NZOA and has been dedicated to adults programming. The NZ Children's Screen Trust advocates a "Junior Platinum Fund" to deliver quality and diverse programmes to children.

Such additional funding tagged specifically for children will help to address market failure.



Targeted funding can create a whole new storytelling environment for our young 21st century citizens.

**14,377, 329 (including Digital Funded Girl vs Boy), out of \$66,074 total contestable funds, excluding the \$14,818 Platinum Fund) NZOA Annual Report 2012/13)*



“It’s hard to find a show that I enjoy that is targeted specifically for my age group and even harder to find one that is local.”
- Jury member, 14 years



The existing (adult) Platinum Television Fund is “a special contestable fund... (which supports programmes with something important to say about New Zealand.

“It supports quality content which may be currently difficult to find on our screens or which may require a high level of public investment to get made.

*“Prime time programmes are preferred where possible.”
(Source: NZOA website)*

Stories that are relevant to children's experience will grow their own internal narratives of who they are and who they want to be.

Dr Ian Hassall, Former NZ Children's Commissioner

WHY A JUNIOR PLATINUM?

We are taking a leaf out of the 'grown ups' book. Our contention is that children are just as important as adult viewers, if not more, and deserve the same quality television programmes across all genres.

Children as a target audience encompass a number of age groups: preschool, early school age, 8–12 and 10–14-year-old programming bands and "youth". Children have different needs and interests within and across these age groups.

NZOA funds children's content in a constrained economic environment and has had no increase in this area. "The economic environment this year was tough for all our stakeholders and we are seeing increasing demand for funding." (NZOA Annual report 2012/13) We contend that such funding constraints threaten diversity. There are not enough quality drama, science, news and documentary programmes for children to meet their needs across their different interests and age groups. To make meaningful quantity on screen lower cost, higher volume programmes are funded.

Adult content is funded across most genres in the contestable fund (approx. \$54 million) in addition to over \$16 million from the Platinum Fund. (NZOA Statement of Intent 2013-16, 2011/12 actual figures)

"As children's programmes screen in off-peak timeslots and do not have high advertiser demand, broadcasters do not usually commission them without substantial financial assistance." (NZOA Local Content Report Television 2013)

- Programming for school-aged children competes in a commercial broadcasting model when children's content does not attract high advertising revenues.
- 100% funded preschool content is low cost and mostly subject to yearly funding rounds.

Other issues impact on children's programming, such as the requirement for a broadcaster attachment:

- in a risk-averse commercial broadcast environment innovative or non-commercial material is limited to small initiatives that come through the digital fund.
- Children are looking for content on all platforms, not just broadcast.

The adult Platinum Fund has proven that it is a workable template to nurture and fund quality projects. The template would work for the younger audience too – a Junior Platinum Fund would assist in delivering quality and innovative programming for children that would enrich their media experience and be valued by the community. Drama is unable to be made in a sufficient scale or quantity within the current funding.

Across the Tasman, for example, "It is a community expectation that children have access to content that deals with stories, concepts and ideas relevant to them, including content that presents a uniquely Australian point of view."

(ABC Report: Issues In Australian Children's Television 2013)

NZOA reported that the majority of New Zealanders believe NZ On Air supports television programmes and activities important to New Zealanders." (NZOA 2013 Statement of Intent). Audience satisfaction on delivering quality programming for children could become an outcome for the Junior Platinum Fund.

Investing in quality programming also ensures that it can contribute to an archive of culturally significant material so "that our culture can be enjoyed by successive generations" (NZOA Fig 13, Our Outcomes Framework, NZOA Statement of Intent 2103).

WHY CHILDREN?

- Children have the right of access to diverse media as New Zealand has acknowledged by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC).
- Children are a numerous and broad category of New Zealand citizens from 0–18 years (as defined by UNCROC). They require content that is developmentally appropriate and reflective of their point of view.
- The Broadcasting Act defines Children and Youth as special groups failed by the market yet deserving of a range of programmes, including drama and documentary.
- Children, like adults, encompass the full diversity of New Zealanders, including different ethnicities and disabilities, also identified specifically under the Broadcasting Act.
- Research demonstrates that the media contribute to children's identity formation. (Messenger Davies M., *Children Media and Culture. Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*, 2010)
- Television viewing is still important with 53% of children watching TV



for two or more hours every day. (NZ Health Survey 2011/12).

- Children are leading media users: “In New Zealand the TNS New Zealand-Canvas survey found the 150 kids sampled used tech devices or services for an average of 7.4 hours a day.” (NZ Herald, Dixon, Greg., *Gen Z: Child of Our Times*, May 3, 2014) – the opportunity to find relevant local content wherever they watch is also essential.

WHAT PROGRAMMES WOULD A JUNIOR PLATINUM FUND?

The NZ Children’s Screen Trust contends that the 8–12 and 10–14 age groups are a high priority.

The contestable funds allocated to children currently prioritise low cost per hour shows “High volume Children’s programmes including *The Erin Simpson Show* [now *The 4.30 Show*], *Tiki Tour* and *What Now...*” (NZOA Local Content Report 2013)

Research in Australia has found that

“while younger children were often unable to distinguish a program’s country of origin, older children could identify reasons for enjoying uniquely Australian content, revealing a strong desire for identification with characters and narratives that unfold in familiar contexts.

The most commonly stated reasons for children aged 8–14 enjoying Australian content were:

- *I like seeing places I recognise.*
- *I like characters or people that remind me of myself or my friends.*
- *I like stories that I think might happen to me or my friends.*” (ABC Report: Issues In Australian Children’s Television 2013)

The NZ Children’s Screen Trust also considers Drama a key priority. NZOA currently funds one or two low-cost (around \$1million) dramas for children. This does not serve all age groups, or allow higher production standards. Just like adults, children deserve a range of engaging drama that ‘tell their story’. Adult drama is currently valued: “The agency supports a range of genre: from expensive, high quality drama programming such as *Harry*, *The Blue Rose* and *Nothing Trivial* which compete with the best international content...” (NZOA 2013 Local Content Report).

A key finding from the 2013 ABC Report “Issues in Children’s Television” was that “Children engage with drama differently from other types of content; they are more highly engaged with drama on a number of levels.”

New Zealand has a great heritage of children’s books, some of which are studied in our schools. But very few of them have been converted into films or TV drama. One of the benefits of the Junior Platinum Fund might be that we build on the once great tradition of kidult dramas that showcased our local children’s literature.

Other key genres include news, documentary and science. Children have a right to material that informs them and that is appropriate to their age.

HOW WOULD A JUNIOR PLATINUM FUND BE ADMINISTERED?

The adult Platinum Fund is administered conscientiously by NZ On Air. It could administer a similar fund for children. This would be a fiscally responsible way to provide money for quality projects for children.



Sometimes the questions are complicated, and the answers are simple

Dr Seuss

The Junior Platinum Fund would advertise for children's projects "*with something important to say about New Zealand.*"

Quality which may be currently difficult to find on our screens or which may require a high level of public investment to get made."

Just as it does for adult Platinum applications, NZOA would "*evaluate proposals against a range of criteria, including the strength, creativity and originality of an idea.*"

WHAT ABOUT NZOA'S FOCUS ON VIEWERS PER INVESTMENT DOLLAR?

We can understand that NZOA wants to make sure the projects it funds are seen by the largest number of people. Children's programmes often have a long shelf life (the longtail) as age groups are refreshed with new cohorts. Those considering the high dollar value investments for children's programming should also consider the advantage of access on different platforms as children increasingly view on mobile devices.

Unlike the Adult Platinum Fund, a Junior Platinum Fund would be accessed for quality kids programming in *their* prime time (adult off-peak). Alternatively they can be targeted through family viewing times, like Sunday evenings. As the ABC research shows early evenings are a key time for co-viewing and the most popular times for viewing.

"Ratings analysis for children aged 2–14 years during October 2012 revealed a peak in children's viewing across most channels during mornings and afternoons, coinciding with the designated C and P program time bands set out for the commercial free-to-air broadcasters in the Children's Television Standards.

However, the highest audiences for children were during the early evening." (ABC Report: Issues In Australian Children's Television 2013)

can show that a large number of children access it freely, therefore a broadcaster attachment would not be a requirement to access the Junior Platinum Fund.

This would open up funding for content to be seen on other platforms: perhaps a new children's channel (another item on the Screen Trust's wish list, eg an online channel) or perhaps across platform, with second and third screenings on different platforms. As the ABC Case Studies show, a well-scheduled and promoted programme will build an audience. (ABC Report: Issues In Australian Children's Television 2013).

WOULD YOU NEED A BROADCASTER ATTACHMENT?

We accept that every project needs to have a 'home' waiting for it – someone willing to make sure it is screened for the target audience. This ensures there is a client/customer to work with the programme-makers to ensure the programme is made to the highest possible standards.

Often this client will be free-to-air television (TV2, FOUR, Maori TV). But not always as media platforms evolve.

We suggest a broader criteria for the Junior Platinum Fund, because children are leading the way in terms of viewing content on other screens. The Junior Platinum Fund criteria should simply state that funding is available for quality projects which have a 'covenant to screen' (and a co-investment offer) from any reputable platform which

FUNDING

The Children's Screen Trust sees film and television not as an end in itself, but as an educational tool in its broadest sense – as a vehicle for reflecting New Zealand values, society, cultures, traditions and transmitting them to the next generation.

The establishment of a Junior Platinum Fund would recognise the importance of diverse content reaching children, in all age groups. This content then has a 'long tail' and an archival worth.

The establishment of a Junior Platinum Fund is an initiative that could fulfill goals across ministerial portfolios such as education, health and broadcasting.

It requires broad thinking and recognition that media can be used as a powerful positive tool to reach all New Zealand kids and enrich their lives.

Twenty NZ children were selected for the NZ Prix Jeunesse Youth Jury. They reflect on local content after watching more than 5 hours of international content for their age group (12-15yrs).



Ruby

I believe the amount of local shows that we currently have on offer for this age group alone is not many. It's hard to find a show that I enjoy that is targeted specifically for my age group and even harder to find one that is local. The standard of some (not all of them, but some) of these international shows are not that great either, especially compared with some of the Prix Jeunesse shows we watched.



Janoshka

Local tv has been boxed in for too long. We need to start thinking outside of the box and go outside of our comfort-zones. Many of our everyday programmes follow the same storylines many others have previously displayed. What teens nowadays need is to watch programmes which display new ideas, concepts and real issues which can stimulate our minds and capture our attention. We don't need superficial Hollywood plot lines and perfect characters. New and relevant concepts that use real issues, real people and changes that an average teen would experience during their time in being a teenager.



Phoebe

We need more variety and choice on TV to watch, and things that will actually enhance our education rather than destroying it.



Clarice

On a more serious note, a local TV show for kids our age could help them get through problems they might be having or stand up for themselves and take action rather than sitting around. They would be a wonderful learning tool that could teach us more about the culture of New Zealand and it would be a stimulating and captivating way for them to learn all this. *Kaitangita Twitch* is a great example, it taught us about Maori culture and myths all the while being an enthralling show that left you wanting to see the next episode.



Dami

I realize after being apart of the Prix Jeunesse Jury and watching all these shows around the world targeted at our age, that New Zealand really doesn't have a current running programme centered around the interests of teens in the country and that most New Zealand made shows are either for older or young audiences and definitely not something teenagers would like to watch.

Appendix

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For further information go to The NZ Children's Screen Trust

<http://kidsonscreen.co.nz>

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The NZ Children's Screen trust is a registered charity No: CC50070