



(RNZ, 2023m)

Media Releases

Independent panel appointed

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RNZ Board Chairman, Dr Jim Mather, has announced a three-person panel to undertake a review of RNZ's editorial processes.

They are media law expert Willy Akel, who will chair the panel, public law expert and former journalist Linda Clark, and former director of editorial standards at the ABC, Alan Sunderland.

"The Board is pleased they are available to conduct this review. They share a long history of editorial and legal expertise," said Dr Mather.

"The Board had concluded a review independent of RNZ was appropriate, and that drawing upon such expertise is the best way forward.

"We have tasked them to conduct a robust and comprehensive review of RNZ editorial processes. This is in the interest of achieving and protecting the highest standards of journalism at RNZ," he said. "We are focused on restoring the public's confidence in us."

The Board met last night and it also agreed on the Terms of Reference (ToR).

"The ToR will allow for rigorous scrutiny of RNZ's editorial processes and examine factors and warning signs which led to international wire stories being subedited with inappropriate content, and then published," said Dr Mather.

On Friday, RNZ started an internal audit of stories that were inappropriately edited. RNZ has identified, corrected, and republished affected stories on its website as they are identified.

These can be found at:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/newsextras/story/2018893905/rnz-editorial-audit>
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Terms of Reference

1. To review the circumstances around the inappropriate editing of wire stories discovered in June 2023, identify what went wrong, and recommend areas for improvement. This includes reviewing the handling of the complaint to the broadcasting minister from the Ukrainian community in October 2022.
2. To review the editorial controls, systems, and processes for the editing of online content at RNZ, assess their effectiveness, and recommend improvements.

3. To review RNZ editorial policy and practice and recommend improvements based on any relevant findings.
4. To advise the board on options for ensuring RNZ has processes in place to safeguard against misinformation or partiality in its news and current affairs content.
5. To advise the board on any other related matters that warrant further consideration.

The panel

Willy Akel is a leading media law expert and is a barrister at Sangro Chambers. He is a recognised expert in corporate and personal reputation management and defamation. He has extensive experience in diverse areas of media law, including defamation and broadcasting standards.

Linda Clark, a partner at Dentons Kensington Swan, is a public law expert and a specialist in judicial review, public law disputes and processes, investigations, and defamation law. She is a former journalist and broadcaster.

Alan Sunderland served as Editorial Standards Director at the ABC. He has had an extensive career as a broadcast journalist with the ABC and SBS. Ends