

OUT OF SCOPE

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Stuff Circuit 3

Stuff

\$374,200

Key Personnel	Title/s	Relevant Past Work
s9(2)(a)	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

Synopsis

- 32. A third season of in-depth investigations launching from Circuit's track record to continue to delve, probe and analyse issues of vital importance to NZ society.
- 33. For 2021 they will produce at least three investigations and at least 90' of video material.

General Assessment

- 34. Stuff Circuit's Christchurch documentary, *Infinite Evil*, won Best Documentary at the Voyager Media Awards in 2020. The proposal notes that, "Circuit to date has attracted 500,115 unique visitors, 710,645-page views, and 152,001 video views".
- 35. Staff asked s9(2)(a) could provide more information about written material produced with this funding, and further statistics around audience. Terence noted, "The recently published *False Profit* investigation gained 71,711 video views of the documentary, plus another 15,705 views of the unedited full video interview with Billy Te Kahika Jnr. Related content had 188,961 page views, so all up, *False Profit* generated 276,377 views of content - written and video (as of 27 October)."
- 36. s9(2)(a) also provided a list of all the written material produced by the Stuff Circuit team this year. Much of which, staff note, did not include NZ On Air accreditation. NZ On Air accreditation rules currently do not explicitly request credit on written pieces however, as mentioned above, staff recommends that this is addressed accordingly in next year's contracts.

37. The budget appears to be asking for a substantive increase on previous seasons (although it is difficult to compare due to past seasons covering different time periods/amounts of content). Staff notes that the first season of *Circuit* recently sent through their final cost report showing a large underspend (almost a quarter of the whole budget). Season 2 of *Circuit* is still in production.
38. Staff notes that an additional 30' of video content are to be delivered with the third season compared to Season 2. However, the team are also planning to reduce the length of each video piece (with a minimum total output of 90' over a year; likely to be three stories each with 3 x 10' video pieces). There is no clarity on how many written pieces would be produced. If funded, staff would need minimum content outputs (including print) to be agreed before contracting.
39. The budget notes highlight the need for outsourcing the interactive design work as Stuff's internal role has been disestablished. As would be expected, there is also a large increase compared to Season 2 in the travel code (Season 2 was funded at the July meeting with the expectation of international travel being impossible).

### Staff Opinion

40. This is a high-quality investigative journalism series which finds original stories and tells them in a compelling way. Staff is supportive of NZ On Air's continued investment in this team.
41. Staff has weighed up the options regarding the budget and notes that the NZ On Air request for the third season is approximately the same as the final costs for the first season, plus \$50k for outsourcing design.
42. Staff further notes that the previous series NZ On Air funded with s9(2)(a) also had a substantive underspend. s9(2)(b)(ii)
43. A counter argument is that the first season was completed when Stuff had different owners, and a different internal financial structure. s9(2)(b)(ii)  
Now Stuff has a better grasp on the real costs of this series, they are better able to predict its annual budget.
44. Finally, s9(2)(b)(ii) which is the same as the additional cost for outsourcing interactive design in Season 3 of *Stuff Circuit*. To date, interactive design costs have previously been offered by both Stuff and NZME as part of their platform support as NZ On Air has not traditionally paid for this type of production for comparative projects. The platform contribution discussion paper which was being drafted when COVID-19 hit had hoped to resolve if this line item should be counted as a cost of production for future applications to NZ On Air, but unfortunately this paper was suspended and this issue remains unresolved. As it stands, interactive design is not something NZ On Air has yet directly paid for outside of bespoke RFPs or initiatives like the Digital Media Fund, HEIHEI Games or the RNZ Innovation Fund.
45. On balance – and given the current Factual overspend in this round - staff believes the interactive design should be removed from the NZ On Air funding request and added to the platform contribution. This will of course result in Stuff having to re-budget the production. **Funding is recommended up to \$324,200 with a platform contribution reduction of up to \$376,918 - subject to revised budget, accreditation, and content output requirements.**