



Level 2
119 Ghuznee Street
P O Box 9744
Wellington 6141
New Zealand

info@nzonair.govt.nz
www.nzonair.govt.nz

Tel: 04 382 9524
Fax: 04 382 9546

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[REDACTED]@nzme.co.nz

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Official Information request and response

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act ("OIA") dated 19 July 2024.

You have requested:

More information on the three-part documentary series that NZ on Air has agreed to fund, as per your press release in April:

- *P.I. Story, 3 x 45', Razor Films for viewing on ThreeNow and Three, up to \$228,000 [A documentary mini-series for ThreeNow and Three, P.I. Story, tracks the course of an ongoing NZ trial.]*

Can NZ on Air please provide answers to the following questions and inquiries:

1. *Can you please send me the synopsis - and all details - upon which NZ on Air agreed funding for the P.I. Story project;*
2. *Can you please send me a breakdown of how the \$228,000 in NZ on Air has been scheduled to be spent;*
3. *Can you please outline for me the reasons why NZ on Air felt this was a worthy recipient of taxpayer funding;*
4. *Did NZ on Air give any consideration to the likely scenario that the Philip Polkinghorne trial will be well-covered by all major media outlets - including their likely own in-depth work? Did this make the project more attractive or less attractive from a funding perspective?*
5. *Did NZ on Air receive any other applications for funding for projects connected to the Philip Polkinghorne/Pauline Hanna case? If so, how many? Has funding been agreed for these additional project/s? If not, why not?*
6. *Can you please provide all internal and external NZ on Air correspondence and communication (including emails, letters and social media messages) in relation to P.I. Story;*
 - a. *This includes correspondence and communication (including emails, letters and social media platform messages) between NZ on Air staff and officials and P.I. Story production company Blonde Razor Ltd;*

Connecting and reflecting Aotearoa

- b. *This includes but is not limited to all internal and external correspondence and communications (including emails, letters and social media platform messages) - including to Blonde Razor - following my initial media inquiries this week. To be clear, this should also include communications about my media inquiries.*

Please see our response below:

1. *P.I. Story* tracks the course of an on-going highly topical New Zealand criminal case. The series starts when charges have been laid and follows the case through court to the concluding verdict.

As per our usual funding process, this project was assessed against NZ On Air's [Investment Principles](#) and the relevant round guidelines (attached). Please find attached a copy of the funding recommendation paper submitted to the NZ On Air Staff Investment Committee in respect of the project in March 2024. We have decided to withhold some information in relation to the financing and stylistic/editorial treatment under Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA.

Given the project has not yet been released, we have further decided to withhold the project proposal, the budget, and the finance plan under Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA.

2. To clarify, *P.I. Story* is funded by multiple financing parties and NZ On Air is a last-in gap funder. With the majority of funding coming from other sources, the project presented a strong business case in a cost per minute sense and its potential to attract an audience. Over the course of the project, we track spending across the entire production budget and therefore, do not require the exact budget lines our \$228,000 will be allocated towards.
3. Please see response at 1, but to provide context, there are a variety of factors at play when we arrive at a funding decision. However, until the programme has been released, we are unable to discuss the editorial elements in the proposal that provided a public media rationale that was integral to our decision.
4. While the trial itself will no doubt attract media coverage, a documentary is a different proposition, and in this case has a strong business case for funding and was assessed as being likely to attract an engaged audience.
5. *P.I. Story* has previously applied for development funding and was declined. Development funding is primarily allocated to drama and animation as these are high cost, high risk genres where more certainty is required before production funding can be considered. Therefore, the bar for development funding of non-fiction content is high as it is occasionally allocated to projects that require significant research to test whether there is adequate material available to tell the story. Other than this instance, NZ On Air has not received any other applications for funding for projects connected to this court case.
6. Please see attachments. We have made redactions under Section 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(b)(ii) of the OIA. NZ On Air was first in contact with the producer regarding this project when they reached out to us to discuss putting in an application for development funding. To clarify, an NDA was signed in April 2023 prior to this discussion as the producer required it in order to talk through details about the project. At the time the working title of *P.I. Story* was "Blonde Ambition".

For your information, funding provided by NZ On Air for all successful projects is [searchable](#) on our website. You can also [sign up](#) to receive our regular industry newsletter via our website.

You have the right to refer this response to the Ombudsman if you are dissatisfied with it. More information on how to do this is [here](#). NZ On Air proactively releases information in accordance with the Government's commitment to the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan. This includes publishing responses to requests for information under the OIA. Please note that this response (with your name removed) will be published on the NZ On Air website shortly and will remain on our website for 12 months.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raewyn Rasch', with a stylized, cursive script.

Raewyn Rasch
HEAD OF OPERATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND CULTURE