

PLATINUM FUND

REVIEW OF OUTPUTS



A REPORT TO NZ ON AIR

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this review was to examine the projects commissioned from the first three years of the Platinum Fund (2009 – 2011), evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each project and assessing how well the projects have met the criteria for the fund.

2 Methodology

In undertaking this review all proposals were reviewed and all finished projects were viewed. Additionally, production files were referenced and all producer reports and cost reports read. Ratings information was analysed and ancillary information such as critics' reviews and award nominations or awards won were also sourced.

3 Background

The Platinum Fund in its previous life was a \$15.1 million dollar per annum allocation to TVNZ to assist the organisation in giving effect to its Charter, introduced by the Government in 2003.

With a few notable exceptions, such as *The Lost Children*, *Rude Awakenings*, *Agenda*, early series of *Rural Delivery*, and the state funerals of the Maori Queen and Sir Ed Hillary, much of the content produced under this arrangement was arguably indistinguishable from TVNZ's other local offerings. Additionally, Charter funding was used to pay licence fees for some prime time programming funded by NZ On Air, effectively making those programmes fully funded from the public purse.

In 2009, acknowledging that the desired results weren't being achieved, the Government redirected this funding and the Platinum Fund was established. The funds were made available to the six main free-to-air national broadcasters (TV One, TV2, TV3, C4 (now Four), Prime and Maori Television) on a fully contestable basis. Ring-fenced from NZ On Air's other funding, the stated aim was to "specifically support content which may currently be difficult to find on our screens and which requires a high level of subsidy to be made." Broadcasting Minister at the time, Jonathan Coleman, in launching the fund said "We want this funding to really make a difference to what we see on our television screens, not just to fund more of the same content we are already getting."

4 Criteria

NZ On Air established specific criteria for the Platinum Fund, the key components being that the programmes would be:

- Innovative
- Aspirational
- Intended to inform, educate and entertain
- Appealing to a cross-section of New Zealanders
- Reflective of New Zealand and its place in the world

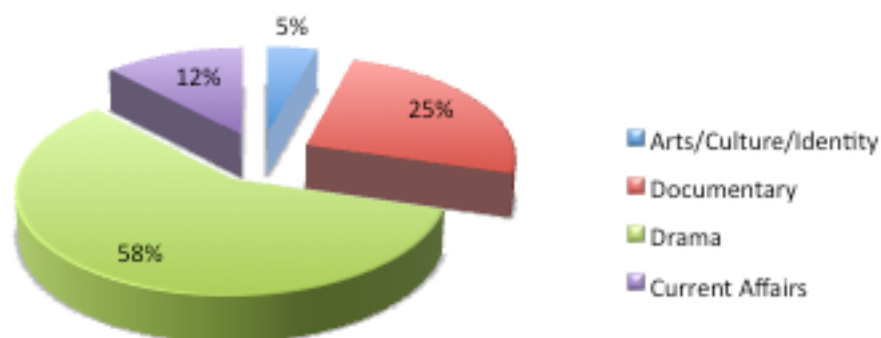
Priority was given to the following genres:

- High-end one-off drama programmes or drama mini-series
- Long-form appealing documentaries on New Zealand subjects of cultural, historical or artistic importance
- Research-driven short documentary series on issues or topics important to New Zealanders
- Specialist current affairs programmes (long-form interview or investigative formats preferred)
- Special event programming designed to celebrate or commemorate days or events important to New Zealanders

5 Allocation of Funds

The allocation of funding for the duration of the Platinum Fund (2009 – 2011) reflects the stated priority genres as well as the cost of producing those genres. Drama accounted for the largest percentage (58%) and consisted of 10 different projects – eight one-off dramas and two short-run series.

Fig. 1 – Platinum Fund (2009 – 2011) Allocation By Genre



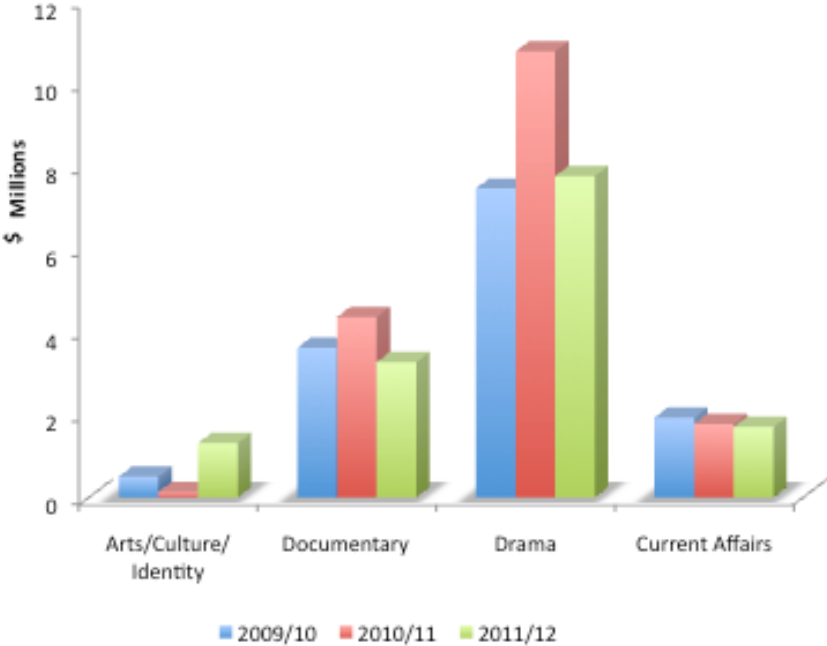
Documentaries, 12 one-off and four series, accounted for the next largest percentage (25%).

Current affairs made up 12% of the funding, for three series of *Q + A* and *The Nation*, screening from 2009 to 2012.

Arts Culture and Identity took up the remaining 5%. This included funding for the *Pike River Official Remembrance Service* and *Tamariki Ora*, a special broadcast on Maori Television highlighting the issue of child abuse.

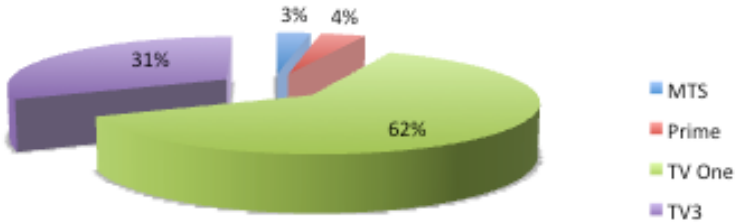
When broken down by year, as could be expected, the most funding was allocated to Drama. Two arts projects, *Nga Reo Hou*, a series of Maori plays for Maori Television and *With Strings Attached*, two specials for TV One featuring collaborations between the NZSO and contemporary artists, account for the increase in Arts/Culture/Identity funding in the 2011/2012 year.

Fig. 2 – Platinum Fund Allocation By Genre By Year



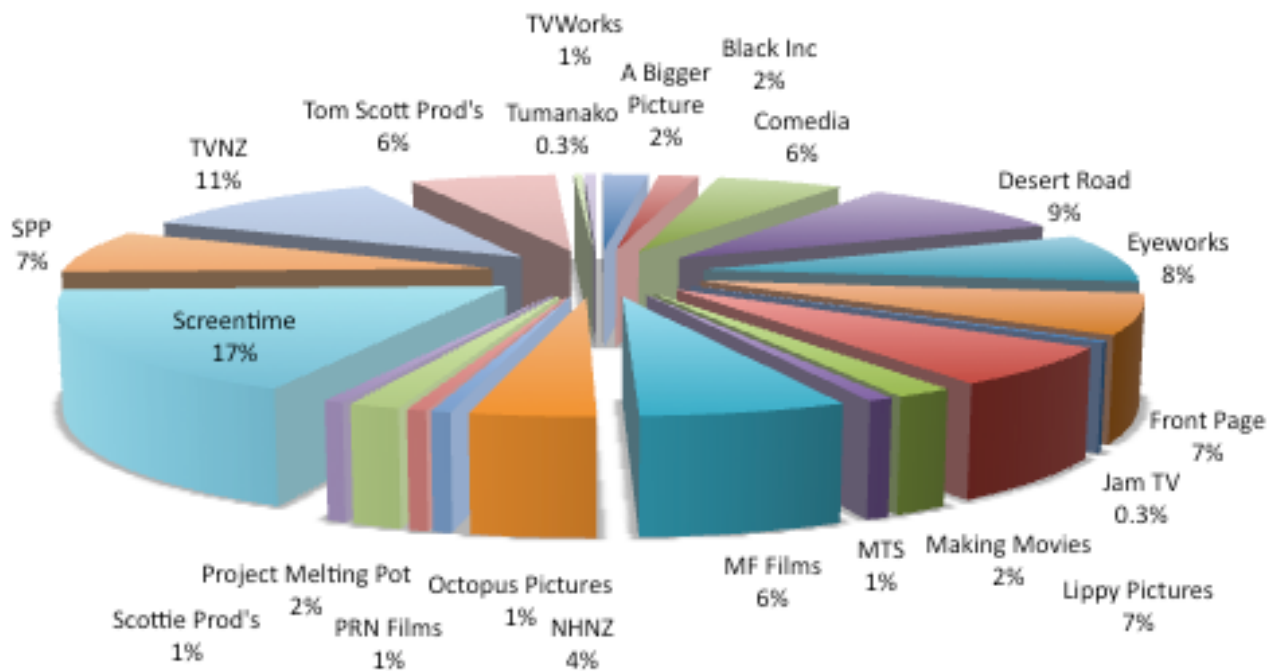
To date, programming screening on TV One has received 62% of the total funding from the Platinum Fund – not surprising given the channel’s market positioning and the history it has with the viewing audience. Programmes screening on TV3 accounted for 31% of the funding, due primarily to *The Nation* and *Underbelly NZ*. Programming for Prime TV and MTS received 4% and 3% of the funding respectively.

Fig. 3 – Platinum Fund (2009 – 2011) Allocation By Broadcaster



The chart below illustrates that the Platinum Fund has been allocated to a diverse range of producers. Screentime and Desert Road have secured larger percentages due to each receiving funding for short-run drama series, *Underbelly NZ* and *Harry* respectively, in addition to other projects. The TV Works and TVNZ figures include unallocated strand funding that will eventually go to independent production companies.

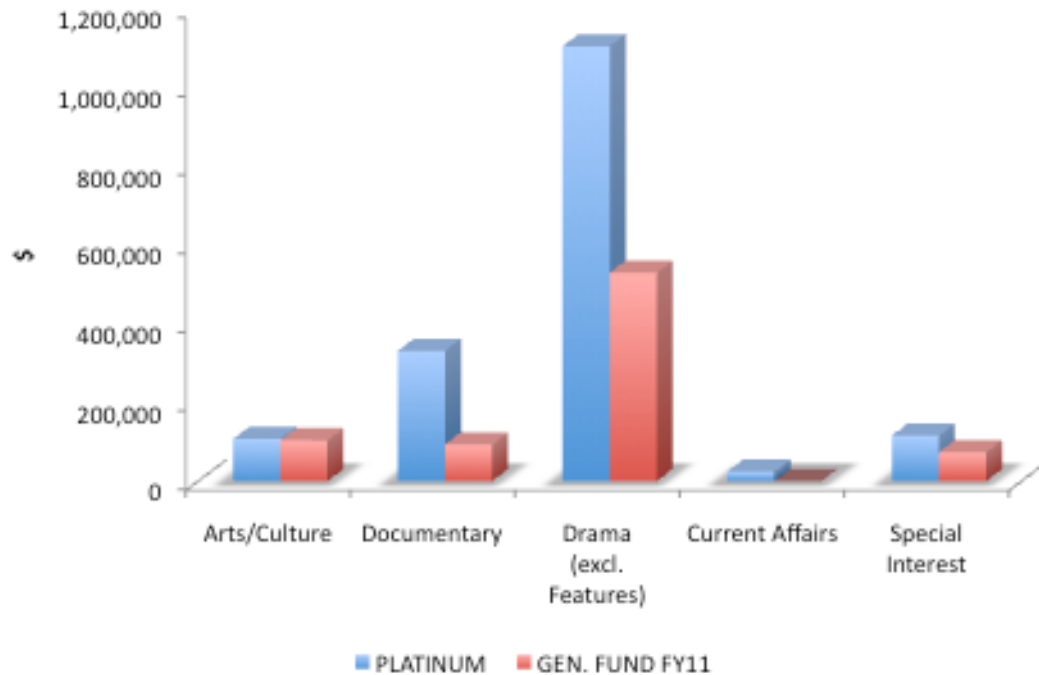
Fig. 4 – Platinum Fund Allocation (2009 – 2011) By Producer



The Platinum Fund is directed at content that normally requires a high level of subsidy to get made. Thus, a comparison of average funding contribution per hour with NZ On Air's general fund is a good measure of whether this is being achieved.

The chart below shows that for the Drama and Documentary genres, when compared to the general fund for FY2011, there is a significant differential in the funding cost per hour. Features have been excluded from the calculation, as NZ On Air's contributions are only a small part of the total budget. Funding contributions to the Arts/Culture genre are aligned, which may indicate that some of this programming should really be funded from the general fund. However, broadcaster reluctance to support this genre for funding from the general fund might be considered a contributing factor. Special Interest only included *Tamariki Ora* so is not necessarily indicative but did show an increased contribution.

Fig. 5 – Average Funding Contribution per Hour



Total hours funded are consistent with the Platinum Fund targets outlined in NZ On Air’s Statement of Intent, with an over-achievement in Arts/Culture/Identity in 2011/2012.

Fig. 6 – Hours Against SOI Targets

PLATINUM FUND HOURS	2009/2010		2010/2011		2011/2012	
	SOI	ACTUAL	SOI	ACTUAL	SOI	ACTUAL
Arts/Culture/Identity	n/a	4.5	1.5	1.5	2	15.0
Documentary/Current Affairs	n/a	92.0	94.5	92.5	88	81.0
Drama	n/a	6.0	11.5	11.5	6.5	9.5
TOTAL	0.0	102.5	107.5	105.5	96.5	105.5

6 Licence Fees

The payment of a licence fee by the broadcaster is expected when funding from the Platinum Fund is sought. All funded programmes, with the exception of the *Pike River Official Remembrance Service*, had a licence fee attached. These licence fees appear to be aligned with those paid for programmes funded from the general fund.

As programmes funded from the Platinum Fund are, on the whole, much more expensive to produce there may be some merit in exploring the payment of higher licence fees to producers – consistent across all broadcasters. This would recognise the higher production costs as well as the prestige of the fund. It could also aid the value-for-money consideration, particularly where the ‘Type 2’ broadcasters are concerned. However, the degree of risk associated with some projects is also a factor when considering the appropriate level of broadcaster contribution.

7 Proposals

7.1 General

In total 38 projects have been supported by the Platinum Fund. Of those 38 projects, 18 have been broadcast, two have been delivered but are yet to be scheduled, 14 are at various stages of completion and four are strand projects still to be confirmed.

The quality of the proposals was generally very good and in some cases excellent, with a considerable amount of research undertaken.

Some quibbles:

- In the case of returning series/strands, the re-hashing of the previous years' applications and letters of support could be perceived as somewhat complacent.
- Key personnel often changed by the time projects went into production. Given the lag that can occur between funding and production, this in itself is not a surprise, but there are times when the key personnel are an important factor in making a funding decision – particularly for high-cost projects that the Platinum Fund supports – and the funder should be kept apprised.

The producer reports and cost reports were of varying standards, some very comprehensive and some scant on detail – others somewhere in-between. Ideally, producers should keep the funder fully informed as the project progresses.

For those projects that have been broadcast, there was no consistency in how the Platinum Fund was credited on screen. A stand-alone Platinum Fund credit could be produced to ensure there is some consistency and also to create better viewer awareness of the fund. Accepting that broadcasters have different presentation requirements, there should still be a standard credit that can be accommodated – perhaps at the front of the programme.

Many funded projects have taken a historical viewpoint. Two projects have focussed on West Coast mining disasters, which, according to one producer's reports, created confusion for the people of the West Coast. Given the historical focus of many projects, both drama and docu-drama, saturation is something to be mindful of.

7.2 Drama

A total of 10 drama projects have been supported by the Platinum Fund of which seven have been broadcast and three are still incomplete. Six feature length dramas have screened – *Billy*, *Bliss*, *Rage*, *Tangiwai* and *What Really Happened: Waitangi* on TV One and *Stolen* on TV3. Two – *What Really Happened: The Women's Vote* and *City Under Siege* – are in post-production. One short-run series – *Underbelly NZ* – has screened on TV3 with a second – *Harry* – yet to go into production.

Two producers secured third party funding in addition to funding received from the Platinum Fund.

Drama – particularly one-off feature length drama – has been an outstanding Platinum Fund success. Quality productions – all telling important stories about New Zealand and New Zealanders – have resonated with the audience and critics alike. *Billy* achieved record ratings

for TV One, reinforcing that the audience has an appetite for quality local stories. Additionally, the Platinum Fund has provided producer diversity, which is critical to the on-going health of the local drama production sector.

It should be noted that the challenge of managing the budget was a universal theme for all the funded drama projects.

7.3 Documentary

Funding has been provided to 17 documentary projects. Two series – *Rivers* and *Wild Coasts* – and two one-off projects – *The Hunt for the Pink and White Terraces* and *Primeval New Zealand* – have been broadcast. Two dramatised documentaries – *Shackleton's Captain* and *Cancerman* – have been delivered to the broadcaster. Seven projects – *The Golden Hour*; *Descent From Disaster*; *The Story Strand*; *Strongman* and *Wild at Heart* – are incomplete. Four are strand projects (one from *The Story* and three TV One docu-dramas) still to be confirmed.

Three of the four projects that have been broadcast screened on Prime TV. They were strong performers from Prime's perspective. The value-for-money argument is somewhat diluted by audience size, but the projects did provide diversity and may not have been supported by the larger broadcasters. *Primeval New Zealand* screened on TV One and marked the return of NHNZ programming to prime time screens in New Zealand for quite some time. And ratings show that the audience approved.

Globally, the one-off documentary has become a bit of an endangered genre in the world of commercial television. Local broadcasters' enthusiasm has also dampened in recent years as consistent ratings for these programmes become harder to achieve. Despite this, documentary programmes continue to rate very highly in NZ On Air's Public Opinion Monitor. This discrepancy between public and broadcaster preference creates a real challenge for the funder. The Platinum Fund could go some way towards addressing the issue by supporting higher budgets and allowing for more in-depth research and development of single documentary projects that might meet the expectations of both.

The New Zealand audience has been pretty well served with local documentary series; *South*; *North*; *Get Fresh With Al Brown*; *Coasters*; *Chef on a Mission* and *Hunger for the Wild* among them – as well as *Rivers*, *Wild Coasts* and *Wild at Heart* supported by the Platinum Fund. This, along with the above-mentioned challenge of getting single documentaries commissioned, is a strong argument for possibly limiting Platinum Fund support to the one-off documentary – be it one-hour or feature-length projects. This would create clear criteria as to what constitutes a Platinum Fund documentary project.

Theatrical documentaries have had great success both internationally and locally in recent years – driven in part by their low cost in comparison to features – but proving there is still an audience appetite for the genre and (as with drama) for local stories. Given the recent success of local titles *The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls* and *Billy T: Te Movie* at the box office, a Platinum Fund initiative with a broadcaster and the New Zealand Film Commission could be worth considering: perhaps renegotiating the windows a little depending on investor ratios. While broadcasters sometimes have an issue with commissioned

documentaries screening theatrically – even at film festivals – before they have screened on television, they willingly accept the very same situation with feature films.

7.4 Current Affairs

The Platinum Fund has supported three series each of current affairs shows *Q + A* for TV One and *The Nation* for TV3. The rationale for supporting both programmes when funding was first allocated was that the series were different in format and would offer choice to the audience. To a certain extent they are different but, in the context of the broader realm of news and current affairs, they are quite similar. They are both studio-based series that provide in-depth analysis, opinion and debate on important and current issues. Interviews and panel discussion/opinion are predominant in both series. They both screen in an off-peak weekend slot. The competition between the series obviously keeps them on their toes but is this at the expense of a prime time current affairs series? It is likely that NZ On Air will have to reassess its priorities in this area on an annual basis. .

7.5 Arts/Culture/Identity

Four Arts/Culture/Identity projects have received support from the Platinum Fund. Two – the *Pike River Official Remembrance Service* and *Canvassing the Treaty* – have screened. The remaining two – *Nga Reo Hou* and *With Strings Attached* – are still to be delivered.

The *Pike River Official Remembrance Service* was very well aligned with the Platinum Fund criteria. The fact that it required funding is reflective of the times with most broadcasters being solely commercially focussed. Without funding it may not have screened – not without some kind of intervention anyway. NZ On Air required coverage to be made available to other broadcasters both locally and internationally.

Canvassing the Treaty and *Nga Reo Hou* are both projects for Maori Television. The former has screened and the latter is still in production. The projects for Maori Television, as with Prime TV, receive less exposure due to their small audience. This does affect the value-for-money consideration but is, perhaps, balanced by their adherence to innovation and diversity criteria. *With Strings Attached* is yet to go into production.

As referenced above, when a comparison is made with the general fund, the average funding cost-per-hour for this genre is not significantly different, which may suggest support from the Platinum Fund – unless a high-cost project – is not required. However, the Platinum Fund does present an opportunity to extend the range of programmes of this type as their presence reduces on screen.

8 Performance

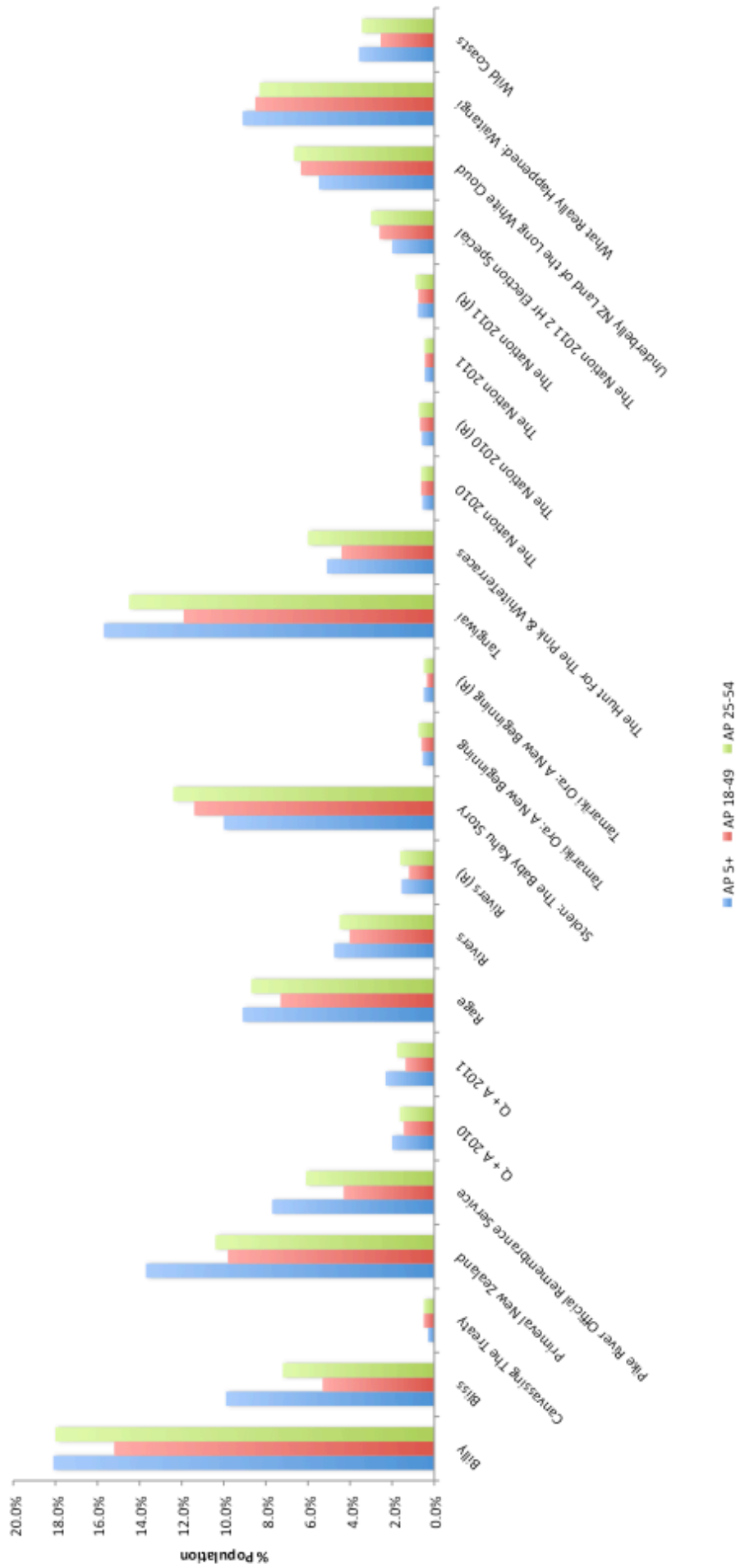
8.1 Against Criteria

Figure 7 (below) illustrates the performance of each project against the stated criteria as well as some additional criteria around delivery and broadcast. For some measures there is an element of subjectivity.

Fig. 7 – Performance Against Criteria

PLATINUM FUND REVIEW OF OUTPUTS	CRITERIA												DELIVERY/BROADCAST								
	INNOVATIVE / FRESH	INFORMS	EDUCATES	ENTERTAINS	RISKY / PROVOCATIVE	WIDE APPEAL	NZ & ITS PLACE	CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, ARTISTIC	MAORI / TE REO	REFLECTS DIVERSITY OF POP.	VALUE FOR MONEY	LICENCE FEE	PRIME TIME	CONSISTENT WITH PROP	HIGH PROD. VALUE	WITHIN BUDGET	ADDITIONAL FUNDING	THIRD-PARTY FUNDING	AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT	CRITICAL ACCLAIM	
BROADCAST																					
Canvassing the Treaty	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arts Culture																					
Pike River Official Remembrance Service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primeval New Zealand - Where Wild Meets Weird Rivers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Hunt for the Pink and White Terraces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wild Coasts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Billy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bliss	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stolen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tangiwai	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Underbelly NZ	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
What Really Happened? Waitangi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q + A 2010	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q + A 2011	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Nation 2010	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Nation 2011	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tamariki Ora	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DELIVERED - YET TO BE BROADCAST																					
Cancerman: The Milan Brych Affair	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shackleton's Captain	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
INCOMPLETE																					
Nga Reo Hou	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arts Culture				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
With Strings Attached				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Descent from Disaster		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Golden Hour		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Story Strand - Health		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Story Strand - High School		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Story Strand - Whanau Ora		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strongman		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wild at Heart		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City Under Siege		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Harry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
What Really Happened: The Women's Vote	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q + A 2012	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Nation 2012		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Fig. 8 - Platinum Fund Ratings Performance



8.2 Ratings

Figure 8 (above) shows the ratings performance of each project across All People 5+ and the trading demographics of AP 18–49 and AP 25–54. This illustrates the strength of performance of the dramas and, more recently, *Primeval New Zealand*.

Billy achieved the highest ratings in four years for a ‘Sunday Theatre’ programme, with 733,000 people, or 18.1%, of the 5+ audience tuning in. *Tangiwai* was not far behind with 636,000 and 15.7% respectively.

A ratings comparison by genre is shown in Figures 9 - 12 (below):

Fig. 9 – Platinum Fund Ratings: Drama

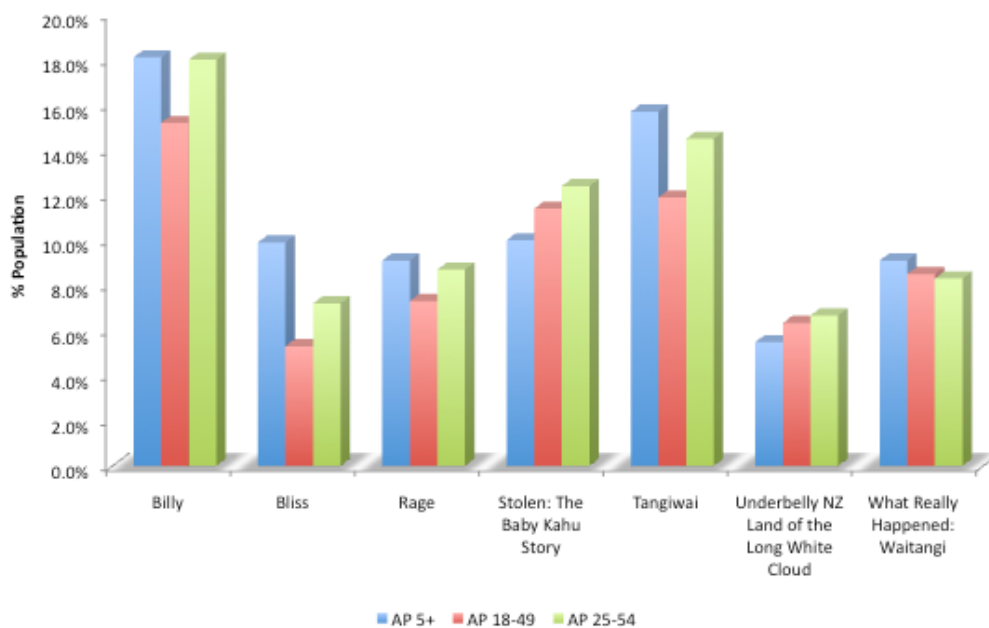


Fig. 10 – Platinum Fund Ratings: Arts/Culture/Identity

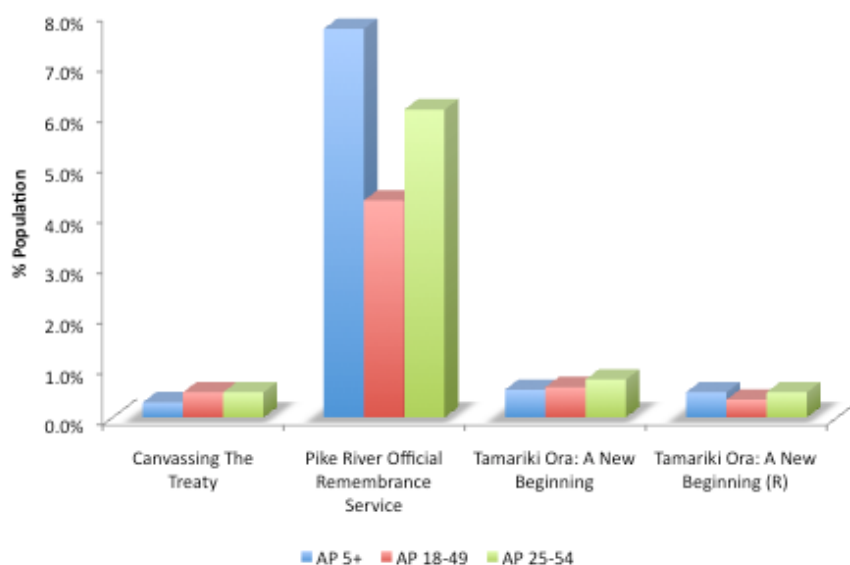


Fig. 11 – Platinum Fund Ratings: Documentary

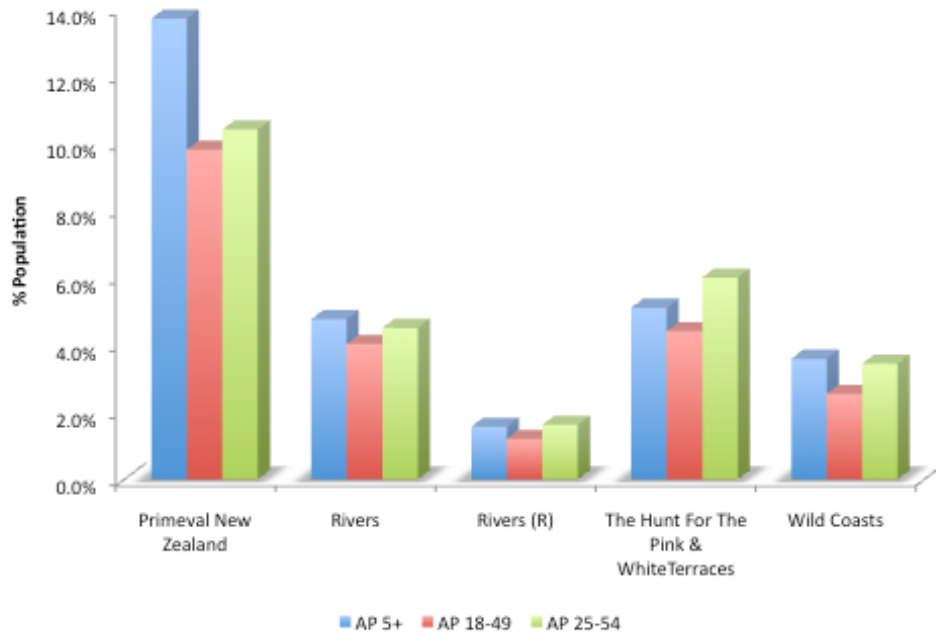
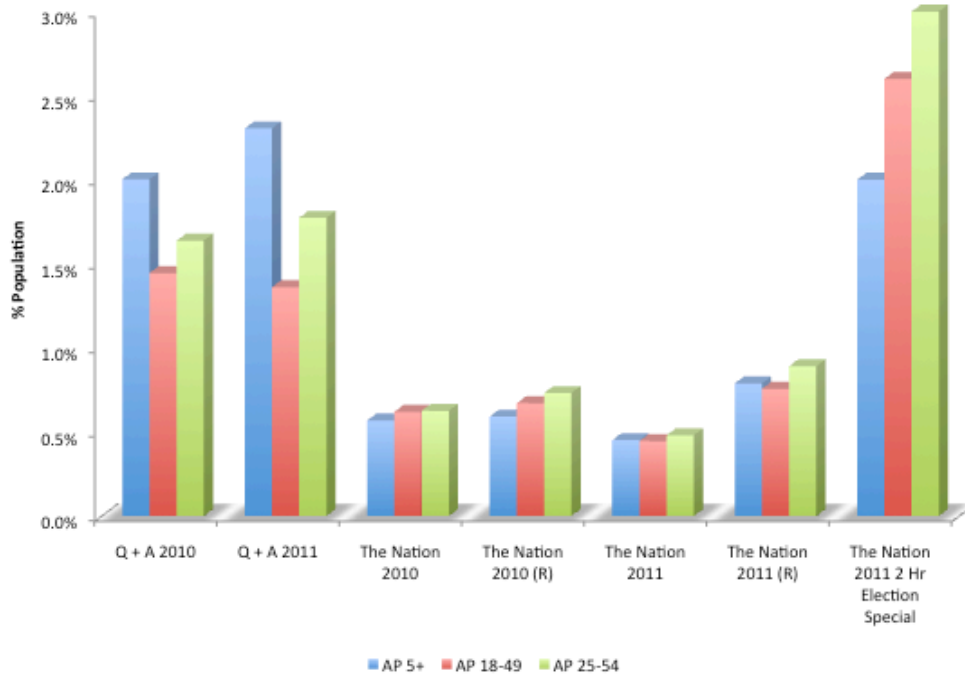


Fig. 12 – Platinum Fund Ratings: Current Affairs



8.3 On Demand

In addition to the broadcast ratings viewers also caught up with some of these programmes on demand. For example, *Billy, Tangiwai* and *Bliss* were streamed 9,929, 7,291 and 5,896 times respectively and the first three episodes of *Underbelly NZ* were streamed 34,680 times.

9 Conclusion

The Platinum Fund has, without doubt, achieved what it set out to do – and more. It has proven itself as source of funding for – on the whole – high quality local content that New Zealanders want to watch. And broadcasters have shown they have a place for the programmes in their schedules. Most funded programmes have screened to a wide audience across four of the six main free-to-air broadcasters, generally achieving very respectable – in one case record – ratings. Stories of our past have been recreated for a whole new generation – and generations to come.

It is important that the prestige of the Platinum Fund is well recognised. But it is also important that the fund doesn't become the "default" fund for high-end, quality programming as a result of more populist projects being supported by the general fund. There is a tendency for broadcasters to push the boundaries in terms of what they will support for funding – particularly in commercially trying times – so vigilance is required to ensure that the Platinum Fund remains true to its original vision.

As yet no programmes have been funded for screening on TV2 or Four, both of which target a younger demographic. There could be an opportunity to seek proposals for these channels in order to meet the needs of a younger demographic, particularly now Four has adopted a broader focus. Children's Drama, which has become difficult to accommodate in the general fund, could be a possible target.