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SDGNZ is extremely concerned about the potential demise of TVNZ 7

Following the recent concern that TVNZ 7 will be closed down in June 2012 the Screen Directors Guild of New Zealand is greatly alarmed about the impact of this potential decision on the future of public broadcasting.

TVNZ 7 is a non-commercial station committed to informing and educating the public. It is a station with a high commitment to current affairs and screens many of our public service programmes. This potential loss means that New Zealanders will be deprived of the kind of quality local content that Kiwis have a right to see, not to mention the on going economic loss of jobs associated with these programmes.

“What will happen to those programmes and where is their home?” asks Executive Director Anna Cahill, “This impending decision, combined with what can only be a policy of disinterest in public broadcasting by TVNZ, indicates the potential death of public service broadcasting. It will have a devastating effect on television and the livelihoods of those working in this industry. Television in New Zealand looks to become a purely commercial environment.”

On the 1st March 2011 TVNZ closed down TVNZ 6 and reprogrammed TVNZ 7 to include content from both channels. On the 13th March TVNZ launched U, a commercially conscious youth channel and on the 1st of May TVNZ will move their Kidzone programming to TVNZ Kidzone24 exclusively on the Sky platform.

To quote TVNZ Head of Digital Channels Eric Kearley in their 28th February 2011 media release, “TVNZ 7 will continue to offer programmes that are often difficult to see on commercial channels. It retains a commitment to quality local and international content that is challenging, diverse and educational.”

The TVNZ Amendment Bill 2009 sets to remove the baseline public broadcasting aims which were represented by the Charter. Once this passes New Zealand will be the only country in the OECD to have taken this step. This, coupled with the potential demise of TVNZ 7 does not bode well for a home for public broadcasting in New Zealand.

“So where will Kiwis see these programmes in the future? Where will Kiwi children whose parents cannot afford to subscribe to Sky see New Zealand children’s television?” asks Cahill.

“It seems New Zealand is looking to shape up as the only Western nation without a public broadcaster.”

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