

# What is the Civics and Media Project?

The Civics and Media Project examined the following question: How do we ensure we have a well-informed and civically engaged population in 2030? Convened by Victoria University of Wellington, the University of Auckland, NZ On Air, the Royal Society of New Zealand, the McGuinness Institute and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, three workshops were held in Auckland and Wellington in late 2015. Participants represented media, government, academia, education and the wider community.

We found there was a strong desire among workshop participants to come up with innovative ways to answer the question that drives this work. Under the three key themes of media, civics and civics education, priorities both for government policy and for industry- and sector-specific initiatives were identified. The three main conclusions from our work are as follows:

- Civic education needs to be strengthened in schools and in tertiary institutions so that the young individual considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own, and is equipped with sufficient critical thinking skills.

- Support for public interest journalism, through enabling policies and funding from both the public purse and alternative funding sources, is required to ensure that we continue to have a strong, independent media industry that covers the big issues affecting society.
- Resources and initiatives aimed at engaging adult New Zealanders in elections and non-political community initiatives need to be better supported and promoted.

The evidence and full set of observations from the three workshops are reflected in the *Proceedings of the Civics and Media Project: a report of the three workshops held in 2015* (2016). The material found on the project website (<http://civicsandmediaprojectnz.org/>) is testament to the commitment and creativity of the more than 150 people who attended these workshops. We plan to continue this conversation, to elevate the most promising ideas and collect new ones along the way. There are no rapid solutions to the problems we have identified. But collectively we can bring about change on a number of fronts that will help us secure the future New Zealand we, and others, aspire to live in.