

Q: \$55 million has been earmarked for public interest journalism.

How would you spend that money?

Re-working the media

Given the question, how would I spend \$55 million in the public interest journalism industry, a lot of things came to mind but one stuck out the most. I wouldn't. I would spend it on better things with better uses and industries with more pressing needs. I will admit I started to write how I wouldn't spend that money for journalism because what's the point if everyone's dead (more on that to come), but like any critical thinker I pondered it after writing the first few sentences. I had my research. I could go on for days about how the mental health industry of New Zealand is failing its people due to lack of funding, but I took a step back and re-read the question '\$55 million has been earmarked for public interest journalism. How would you spend that money?'

The mental health statistics in NZ are shocking which is why given \$55 million dollars to put into public interest journalism, I would put a large sum around \$28 million into mental health awareness. 1 in 5 people in NZ will experience depression at some point of their lives, depression along with anxiety is the most common mental illness in New Zealand. The mental health industry alone does not have enough funding yet the government can cough up \$685 million for a walk/cycle bridge. So with the money I supposedly have in my tiny little hands I would choose to fund mental health awareness in NZ. The way I'd do this is put better research into it, more articles about how it affects people, make it not so 'taboo' to speak up and be heard. I want to conduct awareness for everyone, men, women and children, even those working in journalism. Did you know that 70% of respondents to a survey done by Institute's director of the Journalist Fellowship Programs, Meera Selva, said they were suffering from psychological distress during the covid 19 pandemic. This survey was done to 73 journalists from international news organizations of which 63% responded. Mental health affects everyone, if not you but your friend has a mental health illness it is still affecting you. A large platform, commonly used by Gen-Z, called Tiktok is a way of venting for some teens from all over the world, people vent about their trauma and get support from people

everywhere, but one of the most saddest things I have ever seen in my life is a video by a girl saying how she walked in to see her best friend dead by suicide after being put on hold by a help line. If the help lines aren't helping who is. I'm going to say this again and again. Mental health affects everyone. The need for awareness in NZ is extremely high and by stating these few things I believe you can see my point as well.

The next thing I'd do is put \$12 million into upping wages in the PIJ industry. Reporters, writers, editors, producers etc. don't get paid enough for doing one of the most important jobs in the world. People might come at me and say hey but how is journalism so important, they don't need higher wages. To be upfront I say yes they do. Journalists are the reason you know things like what's happening in parliament or what's happening in the USA. Journalists are also put in dangerous situations especially over covid with the conferences and being the ones to ask the questions that NZ wants to know. Obviously there are precautions but it doesn't make it much better. As for the last \$15 million I would put that into resources. Journalists can't do their work without the necessary equipment. This sum of \$15 million would be broken down into smaller sums covering online web resources, newspaper production, radio technology and equipment and TV broadcasting equipment and obviously office resources and equipment. I think having updated technology and plenty of resources is a must in journalism. The industry will run smoother with better things and a better work environment. It has been proven that a better environment increases work productivity and in public interest journalism when you need to be on the ball all the time you need good productivity happening.

To be fair this is quite a short piece as I was only intending on stating main points, but I think I got my points across. My main statement of mental health is one I am always going to stick by, if someone asks me what I'd do with any large sum of money I'd say help my parents live a carefree life, pay for my siblings university, buy myself a little new york apartment, and last but not least put the rest into mental health funding. Every form I can find of it. It is something I'm so passionate about, we say we need to care more but no one does e.g the government. Thank you for reading, a short read but hopefully a good one.