



### Digital Strategy - Creating Our Digital Future

The Digital Strategy is New Zealand's plan to create a digital future for all New Zealanders by maximising the opportunities that Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) provide. New Zealand will be a world leader in using information and technology to realise its economic, social, environmental, and cultural goals, to the benefit of its people.

The Digital Strategy is made up of three key enablers:

**Content** - Information made available through digital networks. "Information" encompasses heritage collections, Māori language resources, research databases, and traditional and contemporary cultural products.

**Confidence** - Developing the necessary skills at all ages, in all parts of society, to use and participate in ICT effectively. Confidence encompasses addressing the challenges that may slow ICT uptake such as spam and electronic crime.

**Connection** - Affordable access to viable ICT infrastructure such as telecommunications networks, computers, mobile phones and other devices. Utilising ICT to create virtual environments in which communities can connect, especially communities faced with geographic challenges.

**Content** provides the reason, **confidence** provides the skills and trust, and being **connected** provides the means.

### Community Partnership Fund - Unlocking the Potential of Communities

ICT can be used to bring communities closer together, to build the capacity of individuals and groups, extend existing services to isolated communities, or to those excluded from participating fully, and increase participation in the democratic process.

Through the Community Partnership Fund, the government has provided \$17.4 million seed funding to partly fund 119 community driven initiatives that will improve people's capability and skills to use ICT, develop digital content and connect communities.

Partnerships between community, local government, businesses, and government have brought further contributions of over \$30 million to complete the projects.

The Community Partnership Fund supports projects that focus on:

- building ICT skills and capability in regions and communities;
- mapping communities' ICT assets and identifying priority gaps;
- strengthening community projects through the use of ICT;
- connecting communities of interest online;
- addressing issues of confidence, such as safety and security, in using ICT; and
- smart ways to digitise and link content and use technology applications in our communities around New Zealand.

### Wellington Regional 2020 Communications Trust - Whānau Link

#### *Easy Access To Much Needed Support*

Dealing with the loss and grief caused by terminal illness is a very traumatic experience for all of the people involved – hospice staff, patients, partners, families and friends.

Regional 2020 Communications Trust's programme, Whānau Link, fills an important gap in hospice support services by providing palliative care patients, their family and friends with a powerful tool to communicate.

Through funding from the Community Partnership Fund, Whānau Link has harnessed the potential of ICT, allowing hospice patients and their loved-ones to reach out to the members of their whānau, friends, and extended family who can not be there.

"Hospice facilities need to be a calm, peaceful environment and incorporating ICT systems that are subtle enough not to interfere with this tranquillity is a key requirement to the programme," says Mike Rumble, Director of the Wellington Region 2020 Communications Trust. "Whānau Link is an excellent example of a service that uses technology to aid patients, family, friends and staff during a very sensitive and difficult time."

Whānau Link's services are especially valuable for patients from a wide variety of nationalities that may have family and close friends overseas who can not visit them.

Current ICT arrangements within many hospice facilities can be slow, challenging, and impractical, adding more anxiety to an already difficult situation. Many patients only have access to a dial-up connection through the hospice's telephone switchboard. This process can make using the Internet strenuous and impractical to organise. By providing a wireless broadband backbone, which is then linked to an external fibre optic network, Whānau Link ensures that patients are provided with a fast and reliable service, operating independently of the hospice's administrative network.

"Whānau Link is a success because the ICT hardware is simple and easy to use, the technology is proven to be reliable and safe, and the costs of ongoing support and upkeep are sustainable for the palliative care centres," said Mr Rumble.

Whānau Link is intended to meet the special needs of hospice patients by providing Internet access to enable ongoing contact with their communities, work colleagues, friends and extended families, regardless of location. It provides the ability to obtain information on relevant health matters and to communicate with interest groups associated with the particular condition of the patient.

In March 2005, a pilot project was conducted at the Mary Potter Hospice in Wellington. Incorporating the views of patients and staff, feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Whānau Link has revealed some benefits of the system that were not initially considered, such as providing patients with access to Internet banking, business administration, the ability to tidy up personal affairs, and to help them obtain a sense of closure. The creation of a wireless broadband network has allowed both patients and hospice staff to use video-calling for networking and conducting training sessions, helping to save time and money.

Whānau Link currently operates at six hospice facilities and will extend throughout New Zealand as more centres adopt the programme. It may also be adopted by other centres that provide similar care.

