

Submission on Digital Strategy 2.0

This submission is presented by the **National Computers in Homes Coordinating Group** (NCCG), a project group of the 2020 Communications Trust. The NCCG includes representatives from 10 regional Computers in Homes clusters as well as the national coordinator. The regions represented are Far North, Auckland, Ngati Porou East Coast, Gisborne City and Gisborne Rural, Wairoa, Wanganui, Eltham, Porirua and West Coast (South Island). The national coordinator represents all other areas of New Zealand.

Computers in Homes Rorohiko I roto ngā Kāinga is a programme that brings computer technology within reach of all New Zealand families with school-aged children. The programme provides families in low-income communities with computers and the internet, but more importantly, training, skills and support through their local school. With the skills and confidence to use technology, parents are able to connect with their children's learning. As a result, Computers in Homes helps to strengthen relationships between families and schools, improve educational outcomes for children, and provide greater opportunities for their parents.

The Need

Computers in Homes has already helped to connect more than 4,000 families with major support from the Ministry of Education and the Community Partnership Fund. However another 100,000 families are still waiting. An analysis of the March 2006 census data revealed that 29% of all families with school-aged children did not have access to the Internet. But what is even more alarming is the inequity of access by region. For example in the Opotiki District, 59% of families with school-aged children did not have internet access, while on the North Shore of Auckland only 13% did not have access.

2005 Digital Strategy

The 2005 Digital Strategy acknowledged the success of the Computers in Homes programme and this undoubtedly led to substantial support being received through the Community Partnership Fund. In Round 1, \$1.3 million was allocated to support 850 families in four regional clusters. In Round 2, a further \$1.6 million was allocated to support 872 families in six regional clusters.

Digital Strategy 2.0

We are disappointed that no explicit reference has been made to Computers in Homes in the Digital Strategy 2.0. We would have expected this new strategy to build on the project successes in the 2005 Strategy and provide direction for scaling them up, either with explicit funding support or better still, by embedding the initiatives into government policies and programmes. We do not need further "project funding" to test out ideas. We know Computers in Homes works. We want to see the good ideas spread so that everyone has the opportunity to participate. And this requires a medium to long-term commitment from Government.

Our Proposal

Computers in Homes must now migrate from a series of small-scale projects into a national programme.

Government support is needed for:

- Establishing an annual budget line of \$15 million to reach 10,000 families each year, to reach the goal of all 100,000 families within 10 years;
- Sustaining an ongoing research effort;
- Integrating the programme with other government initiatives in education, health, employment and social development;
- Assigning a lead government agency to maintain oversight of the programme and ensure ongoing funding

The national 2020 Communications Trust, our related regional ICT Trusts and other strategic partners, including local councils, are willing and able to continue to manage programme delivery.