



22 May 2008

Digital Strategy 2.0 Submission  
Digital Development Group  
Ministry of Economic Development  
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**WELLINGTON**

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Dear Sir/Madam

Please find enclosed our submission to the Digital Strategy 2.0 from  
Development West Coast.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Warren Gilbertson", written over a white background.

Warren Gilbertson  
Regional Development Manager

## **Development West Coast Submission to the Draft Digital Strategy 2.0**

### ***Introduction***

This submission is in response to the Draft Digital Strategy 2.0. Development West Coast (DWC) supports the government's initiatives documented in the Draft Digital Strategy 2.0. and acknowledges the comprehensive approach taken.

DWC's mission is to create an environment for sustainable investment, development and employment opportunities including partnerships with organizations and community groups engaged in areas such as social development, environmental sustainability and infrastructure developments. DWC is commercially and politically neutral, and is able to act as a regional advocate on economic development and commercial matters.

DWC acknowledges that there is a direct correlation between economic growth and the timely provision and access to robust infrastructure. Therefore access to quality high-speed broadband infrastructure within the region is essential to the continued and sustainable economic growth of the West Coast region. It also reduces the barriers of isolation and assists in building community inclusion within a region characterized by small communities spread throughout a long narrow geographical with indifferent terrain.

As the lead Economic Development Agency for the region, DWC has already taken a leadership role in Broadband and ICT uptake development.

The West Coast region has been actively involved in the initial digital strategy through the Broadband Challenge and Community Partnership Fund, the three district libraries involvement in the Aotearoa Peoples Network and the 2020 Trust Computers in Homes programme delivered through WestREAP. DWC is also a partner with the Ministry of Education (Collaborative Innovations Fund) in funding a three year West Coast Education Sector ICT Facilitator role and contributing to the Ministry of Education School Network Upgrade project.

This submission covers only the two areas that DWC has been most involved in - Connection and Confidence.

### **Connection**

DWC has been an active partner with government in remote and rural broadband infrastructure investment. DWC strongly supports continued investment in this area.

### **1. The 97% Coverage Goal**

A national goal of 97% terrestrial coverage, while commendable, needs further consideration. The 3% left out are always remote rural communities. The target should instead focus on the principle of "all communities where it is reasonably financially viable to install broadband infrastructure" as opposed to a straight % of cover.

The process used on the West Coast would be a good model for other rural areas to follow. It was based on mapping the region's network and population location and identifying the areas where it was viable to invest in infrastructure.

### **2. Continued Investment in Community Broadband**

Remote areas require up-to-date communication networks to be able to manage, what are often, highly profitable and valuable businesses to their district economics. The network also assists the communities of people that live and work in these areas.

The priority for government must be to ensure at least one broadband provider (outside satellite) is available to as much of the remote/rural/underserved community as is financially possible. This, in DWC's opinion, should be considered before subsidising alternative competitive networks is considered.

### **3. A National Fibre Backbone – Strategic Fibre Investment**

The government must look at 'future proofing' the telecommunications network from a national perspective. Strategic fibre installations into areas of growing importance should be considered. In the case of this region, completing the West Coast fibre backbone through a support fibre link between Fox Glacier and Haast is considered the next priority. This link is considered by DWC to be of national importance to the tourism industry and related service sectors being the link between two of New Zealand's popular tourist nodes Queenstown and the Glaciers.

In addition, it is imperative the needs of health services including emergency services in the Haast area should also be considered in terms of strategic importance.

The communities in this remote South Westland area currently operate off aging technology that needs updating. DWC is willing to partner with government and Telecom to advance the completion of the fibre link into Haast. It is likely there are other areas that could be considered of national strategic importance in New Zealand.

#### **4. Access to the Transport Corridor**

Improving access to the transport corridor has been included in the draft strategy and is supported by this submission. Changing regulations governing the laying of cable within the road corridor are a concern for remote rural projects. These may in fact, put at risk, the future ability to undertake this work both through logistical issues and cost.

Examples of Transit conditions that impact on laying fibre and escalating the cost of these projects include:

- ❖ Not permitting mole-ploughing within 2 metres of seal edge. In the past mole-ploughing has been successfully carried out at 1.0 metre offset from the seal without significant damage to the seal. Any damage to the seal is repaired to Transits standards. The alternative is to trench and backfill resulting in 3-4 times the cost
- ❖ Increasing the minimum depth of cable installed to greater than 1.0m
- ❖ Not allowing tracked machines on the seal. Tracked machines can successfully operate on sealed areas without damage if the tracks have rubber pads fitted or rubber conveyor belting is laid between them and the seal.

#### **5. Affordability of Last Mile Technologies**

DWC would also like to see the establishment of a subsidy for those in the very last mile to enable broadband to be more affordable.

#### **6. Retention of the TSO**

DWC support retention of the TSO and incentives to ensure the rural network and rural customers has a base level of service.

### **Capability**

#### **7. Supporting the Education Sector**

ICT capability being developed in the Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Adult Education sectors is an important foundation to the future of New Zealand's businesses and communities. DWC has also placed importance on these sectors and partnered with the Ministry of Education to enhance ICT professional development and the hardware in these sectors. DWC supports the capability actions within Section 4.3 particularly those focused on the support to teaching and curriculum development around technology literacy.

## **8. The Community Partnership Fund**

DWC supports the continuation of this fund. It has provided the catalyst enabling many leading initiatives and national exemplars be developed. These are now emerging on the West Coast. Other communities will be able to follow the lead given and develop their own tailored projects expanding the uptake and utilisation of the broadband network, and the capabilities and digital literacy of local communities.

## **9. The Aotearoa People's Network**

This project has been an instant success on the West Coast. DWC strongly promotes the ongoing funding of this initiative that provides free internet access to residents without access to computers or a broadband connection. This funding needs to include maintaining the connection and supporting upgrading of the hardware. DWC encourages the government to consider expanding the investment to technology training being made available to library staff and to programmes promoting the upskilling of those using the network and expanding local digital content.

## **10. Support to the Rural Business Sector**

DWC encourages a greater focus on assistance of technology literacy into the rural, and particularly the small business sector. On the West Coast there are, for example, very few initiatives that keep the small business, farming and tourism sectors up-to-date with the latest technology applications.

As an example, tourists visiting the coast are increasingly using Web 2.0 technologies to plan their itineraries and confirm their choice of holiday activity. The ability to keep operators upskilled with the knowledge to incorporate these new mediums of communication and promotion is limited. The same can be said of the rural small business service sector.