

## LIAC POSITION STATEMENT ON THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

LIAC welcomed the release of the Digital Strategy in May this year and applauds the approach that has the three areas of content, confidence and connection, inextricably linked. LIAC was also delighted that one of its members, Paul Reynolds, was included in the list of appointees to the Digital Strategy Advisory Group, that were announced in June by the Information Technology Minister, Hon David Cunliffe.

The Digital Strategy was discussed at LIAC meetings in July and appreciation was expressed that many of the recommendations in the LIAC submission on the draft Strategy had been incorporated. These recommendations had been summarised in a presentation to the 2004 LIANZA conference as:

- The Digital Strategy would be strengthened by incorporating mātauranga Māori into the way that New Zealand articulates its digital future
- LIAC proposes the creation of a new entity, **NZ Online**
- NZ Online could support 'imagination points' i.e. projects, which could provide the framework for a world-class, digital infrastructure
- Public libraries could be used as vehicles to advance the Strategy vision
- Changes to legislation concerning the provision of consistent and equitable levels of public library service would be required
- LIAC was delighted to note ambitious benchmark targets set for broadband by 2010, but was concerned about New Zealand's ability to achieve them given that it has fallen behind other developed countries

It is particularly pleasing to see that LIAC's concept of 'NZ Online', which was presented to Ministers Marian Hobbs and David Cunliffe at the end of 2004, appears as a key element in the National Content Strategy (NCS). The three areas of activity in the NCS represent a practical application of a parallel focus expressed more broadly by LIAC in its strategic directions. The NCS is also a logical place for mātauranga Māori to be considered.

LIAC expected to see greater prominence given in the Strategy to the role of public libraries as key agencies that will make the Digital Strategy work. The infrastructure already exists but the option of using the public library network to make the Strategy meaningful to many New Zealanders, particularly digital immigrants, has not yet been articulated. There is opportunity for this to be addressed under individual projects.

The actions in the Digital Strategy that LIAC wishes to focus on are:

- National Content Strategy [p.13]
- Any questions [p.14]
- Broadband challenge and Advanced Network [p.30]
- Telecommunications Act Review [p. 31]
- Connecting Communities Strategy [p.35]
- Whānau Connections [p. 35]
- People's Network [p. 35]
- E-Local Government Strategic Plan [p. 49]

LIAC's views on these areas are:

### **National Content Strategy [p.13]**

LIAC believes that this is an essential piece of work that will lay the groundwork for assessing the value of 'content' initiatives that will ultimately lead to a fully functioning NZ Online. LIAC's vision of NZ Online is that it would act as a rich and sophisticated information environment, which connects individuals and communities i.e. NZ Online would be the 'knowledge bank of New Zealand'.

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NZ Online will ensure that New Zealand Aotearoa is a leader in the development of innovative and practical solutions, for the maintenance of the free circulation of information required to safeguard our democratic society (information democracy).

LIAC sees the scope of the NCS as including both New Zealand content and any other content of relevance to New Zealanders i.e. access to international content.

LIAC has a concern about the level of funding assigned to this key platform in the Digital Strategy compared to some more 'special interest' actions.

**Any questions [p.14]**

LIAC commends the Pilot project, which has clearly demonstrated its value. It now requires ongoing funding to ensure that all school children have equitable access to this service, using a technology that is familiar to them.

**Broadband challenge and Advanced Network [p.30]**

LIAC retains strong misgivings about the slow progress of these projects and the loss of opportunity for New Zealanders compared to those in other OECD countries

The role of MUSH networks (p. 32) is an interesting concept, requiring sound business models and evaluation against other broadband strategies.

**Telecommunications Act Review [p. 31]**

LIAC supports a telecommunications regulatory environment that stimulates rather than stifles development and sees this as a critical issue for New Zealand.

**Connecting Communities Strategy [p.35]**

LIAC recommends that the public library network be utilised to achieve the goals for this Strategy. The disparities within the public library sector across the country would need to be overcome.

**Whānau Connections [p. 35]**

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**People's Network [p. 35]**

LIAC is confident that the National Library, as lead institution, will promote a model similar to the successful People's Network in the UK, and hopes that appropriate funding will be assigned.

**E-Local Government Strategic Plan [p. 49]**

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**Other general observations on the strategy**

- More commentary on globalisation and being digitally linked with the rest of the world is required
- Strategy needs to address issues of technology and social values, e.g. privacy issues, openness and transparency, misuse of information
- Balancing access with intellectual property of the creators is a huge issue
- Promotion of Creative Commons provides a solution which needs to be considered
- Amendments to Copyright Act are also important