

MEDIA RELEASE

11 January 2006
For immediate release

LIAC CONTRIBUTES TO INFORMATION DISCUSSIONS ON THE WORLD STAGE

Paul Reynolds, Commissioner on the Library and Information Advisory Commission (LIAC), has returned from attending the second World Summit on the Information Society.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) aims to build a global, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society. The first phase of WSIS, held in 2003, highlighted issues surrounding access to digital technology. The second phase of WSIS, hosted by the Government of Tunisia in the capital city Tunis in November 2005, focused on the importance of ICT as an economic, social and cultural tool for growth, innovation and development for all nations.

Paul Reynolds, attending as the LIAC representative on the New Zealand delegation, joined representatives from 175 countries in Tunis. He reported favourably on the Summit, where the principles of fairness, empowerment, freedom of thought and expression, and citizens' rights to access information were strongly emphasised.

In a local context, WSIS has informed the development of New Zealand's own National Digital Strategy. Launched in May 2005, the Strategy provides a blueprint for action in New Zealand, with the three areas – content, confidence and connection – inextricably linked. LIAC has endorsed the Strategy.

Paul Reynolds says: "LIAC considers that the public library network has a key role to play in making the National Digital Strategy meaningful to all New Zealanders. LIAC has devised the concept of 'NZ Online' – a rich and sophisticated information environment connecting individuals and communities – as an essential part of providing uniquely New Zealand information for all New Zealanders."

After attending WSIS Paul Reynolds also met with LIAC's international reference group, the United Kingdom's Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. This meeting emphasised the importance of developing a Peoples' Network in New Zealand to link public libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaux, and the challenges faced by public libraries and local governments in providing services to their communities.

Library and Information Advisory Commission www.liac.org.nz
World Summit on the Information Society www.itu.int/wsis/
National Digital Strategy www.digitalstrategy.co.nz.

