

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **LIAC welcomes additional \$2 million for Aotearoa People's Network funding**

The Library and Information Advisory Commission (LIAC) Ngā Kaiwhakamārama i ngā Kohikohinga Kōrero welcomes additional funding that will enable more New Zealanders to access the internet for free through their local libraries.

The Aotearoa People's Network was created to provide free access to broadband internet services in public libraries, so New Zealanders can benefit from creating, accessing and experiencing digital content.

The Network was allocated an additional \$2 million through the Digital Strategy 2.0, funding that will see the number of participating libraries rise to 130, and extend it into up to 10 marae, over the next three years.

The additional funding will also create 30 digital repositories, or community kete, for use by New Zealand communities. The kete will provide a space for user-generated content – meaning that people can bring content into their local library, digitise it and save it, and also save material that they have created online.

LIAC has championed the cause of equitable access to information for all since its inception in 2003. The group is a strong supporter of the Aotearoa People's Network – which has already been rolled out in 58 libraries across the country, with another 28 to go in the next wave – seeing it as the gateway through which many New Zealanders have their digital experiences.

Brian Pauling, Chair of LIAC, says that it is strategically important that New Zealand develops and maintains an online 'public space' in the digital age.

"As New Zealand struggles with its digital identity, the role of the Aotearoa People's Network is increasingly important," he said. "The Network begins to offer all New Zealanders access to their culture and heritage – information stored about themselves and their nation – as well as providing a space to create and save information."

Although LIAC applauds the new funding, they believe that this is only the beginning of the journey. "The additional \$2 million is wonderful news," said Brian Pauling. "But this is just the start – LIAC would like to see the Aotearoa People's Network connecting all New Zealanders with online content, giving them the opportunity to participate in the digital world of New Zealand and beyond."

LIAC advises the Minister Responsible for the National Library on library and information issues, including mātauranga Māori.

For further information contact Brian Pauling:

Phone: 027 540 8264

Email: [paulingb@cpit.ac.nz](mailto:paulingb@cpit.ac.nz)