

InternetNZ partners in TV Internet debate

InternetNZ is partnering in the production and broadcast of a pre-election debate aimed at increasing the general public's understanding of ICT policy issues.

The debate is being held at Avalon Studios on 23 September at 9.10pm. Politicians from four parties will be quizzed on major areas of ICT policy including broadband, convergence, open source software, digital copyright and cyber-safety.

The politicians are Labour's Minister of Communications Hon David Cunliffe, National ICT spokesperson Hon Maurice Williamson, ACT Leader Rodney Hide and Greens ICT spokesperson Metiria Turei.

Radio New Zealand broadcaster Sean Plunket is moderating the debate, with questions posed by experienced journalists Fran O'Sullivan and Russell Brown.

There will be two hours of live video streaming and online chat, with the first hour being broadcast live on TVNZ7.

InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson says the event provides a golden opportunity to tap into considerable public interest in broadband and other ICT-related issues.

"The debate will demonstrate the power of the Internet in enabling the engagement of the general public. Broadcasting and the Internet are rapidly converging, providing new opportunities," he says.

To watch the debate, join the chat and discuss the issues go to the website at www.debate.net.nz.

Network Strategies researches broadband options

InternetNZ has engaged Auckland-based Network Strategies to produce a detailed report assessing broadband strategy options for New Zealand. This follows a Request for Proposal process begun in June, which attracted ten respondents.

The first stage of the project will include discovery, scoping and literature review leading to recommendations for the focus of Stage Two, which will result in a final report later in the year.

"There continues to be considerable public debate on New Zealand's broadband strategy," says InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson.

"Network Strategies will look at all the models already proposed locally and investigate international experience. InternetNZ is aiming for a report that will both inform public debate and provide pragmatic advice for proceeding."

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OLPC comes to Niue

The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative has donated 500 low-cost laptop computers to the tiny South Pacific island of Niue.



This will provide a computer to every primary and secondary school age child and teacher on Niue, where there is already extensive free wireless access.

The computers are capable of mesh wireless networking, where they find each other and establish their own networks. This may in effect extend Niue's wireless network.

These will be a valuable educational tool for the children of Niue. OLPC are helping to bridge the digital divide and bring the Internet to everyone.

The laptops use the open source Linux operating system, include built-in software, and can be recharged manually.

Broadband growth encouraging

The latest ISP survey from Statistics NZ shows the number of broadband subscribers in New Zealand has increased 10.7 percent to 891,000.



The results, for the six month period ending March 2008, also reveal falling numbers of dial-up subscribers.

InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson says New Zealand rates well against other countries in terms of its overall Internet penetration but while the rest of the world is embracing advanced broadband, many New Zealanders are still making do with last-century technology.

The survey shows that the most common download speed for broadband subscribers is between 2Mbit/s and 10Mbit/s.

However, Davidson notes that connection speeds are theoretical maximums and don't necessarily reflect achievable speeds to end users.

"There may be 30 people connected to a single cabinet, sharing a 2Mbit/s stream back to the exchange. At peak use times this could mean their 'broadband' may be as slow as or slower than a dialup connection."

Most users have a small five gigabyte data cap, indicating perhaps data costs are still an issue and perhaps causing reluctance from some users to full embrace what broadband offers.

The survey shows that strength of competition and the regulatory environment are less of a barrier to ISP growth than previously. However, the cost of international bandwidth is increasingly perceived by ISPs as a barrier to growth, says Davidson.

"The Southern Cross cable is a potential bottleneck with its monopoly provision of service.

Having a second or third fibre optic cable to New Zealand would be valuable to provide competition for international bandwidth."

History of NZ Internet published

A 700-page book documenting the history of the New Zealand Internet was launched in front of 120 people at The National Library in late August.

'*Connecting the Clouds - The Internet in New Zealand*' was commissioned by InternetNZ in 2006 to chronicle the people, activities and events that contributed to the creation, then growth, of telecommunications and Internet technology in this country.

It is written by author Keith Newman and published by Auckland-based Activity Press.



'*Connecting the Clouds*' is unique for examining from a New Zealand perspective what has proven to be one of the most significant technological changes in human society.

Author Keith Newman

"The book is a highly readable, accurate account of New Zealand's part in the Internet revolution, and a valuable resource that draws first-hand from almost all of the pioneers involved in its development locally," says InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson.

In keeping with the book's subject matter, the Society has reproduced the entire contents of the book on a wiki (www.nethistory.co.nz), for the general public to refine the work and contribute to keeping it up to date over time.

Hard copies of the book are available for purchase at major bookstores. Copies are also available for purchase online at the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/5gdvoy>

Government issues BIF criteria

The Government issued the final criteria for its Broadband Investment Fund (BIF) in August.

InternetNZ supports the BIF's high level outcomes, particularly those contained in the urban criteria, which aim for deployment and wholesaling of passive, technology neutral infrastructure.

The Society is pleased that the criteria for rural areas focuses on underserved areas but remains concerned that the availability of funds is limited to areas without terrestrial-based broadband.

Included in the criteria is a 'One-Stage' fast track process for applications in the first round of funding, which should significantly speed things up for applicants who have already prepared business cases.

"Overall the government has taken on board many of the suggested improvements to the initial criteria, and the Investment Fund now looks ready to deliver targeted, useful assistance to rolling out broadband in rural and urban areas," notes InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson.

Digital Strategy 2.0 welcomed

The Government released its Digital Strategy 2.0 in late August, with InternetNZ Executive Director Keith Davidson describing the document as a robust framework for New Zealand's future in the digital world.



However, the Society is concerned that the connectivity targets contained in the Strategy will fail to deliver the gains that true high-speed broadband allows.

Davidson says the targets (20Mbit/s or higher to 80 percent of users by 2012, and 10Mbit/s or higher to 90 percent of users) are based on unrealistically low assumptions for bandwidth demand in 2012.

“The new Strategy could and should have set world-leading targets, but it has failed to capitalize on the opportunity to do so. The only predictable aspect of bandwidth is that demand is growing rapidly and that new applications will require ever more bandwidth,” he says.

More pleasing is the Strategy's commitment to additional funding for NetSafe and the Aotearoa People's Network.

“The extra resourcing will enable NetSafe to play a greater role in ensuring confidence through cyber-safety education, though more funding would allow even more use of NetSafe's world-leading expertise in making the Internet safer for Kiwis.

The People's Network should benefit from greater community reach, giving more communities the chance to experience very high speed broadband.”

The Strategy also includes a new action point relating to scoping the establishment of a national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), with InternetNZ as one of the responsible agencies.

The Strategy acknowledges the rapidly looming exhaustion of IPv4 addresses, and this acknowledgement is important and welcome. The Strategy doesn't acknowledge the urgent need to migrate networks to IPv6.

Additional funding has also been tagged for completing a review of broadcasting regulation. “However, the Society maintains that the convergence of broadcasting, communications and IT is occurring at such a rapid pace that the Government needs to seriously consider combining all of these policy functions into a single ministry.

The Strategy will also see the introduction of a Digital Content Innovation Cluster, which InternetNZ fully supports. “It is applications that are going to drive new forms of content and we support the goal of leveraging emerging opportunities in digital content,” says Davidson.

events

PacINET

September 1 - 5, Rarotonga
picisoc.org

IPv6 Technical Workshop

September 8 - 12, Auckland
internetnz.net.nz

Impact 08 Seminar

September 15, Access Grid
2020.org.nz/impact

TVNZ7 Internet Debate

September 23, Online
election.internetnz.net.nz

Business Internet Awards

October 7, Wellington
tuanz.org.nz

Impact 08 Seminar

October 20, Access Grid
2020.org.nz/impact

RIPE 57

October 26 - 30, Dubai
ripe.net

ICANN

November 2 - 7, Cairo
icann.org

Lawrence Lessig Lecture

November 3, Auckland
business.auckland.ac.nz

IGF

December 3 - 6, Hyderabad
intgovforum.org

APTLD

December 1 - 2, Hyderabad
aptld.org

NZNOG

January 28 - 30, Auckland
nznog.org

ComCom NGN Conference

February 26 - 27, Auckland
comcom.govt.nz

Applications open - Mediators & Experts

The Domain Name Commission Ltd is seeking three Mediators and three Experts to help administer its Dispute Resolution Service (DRS).

Candidates with knowledge of domain name issues and experience with mediation and arbitration are invited to apply. Existing Mediators and Experts are also being invited to reapply.

Full details and application packs are available on the Domain Name Commission website:

Information for Applicants - Mediators:
dnc.org.nz/story/30319-29-1.html

Information for Applicants - Experts:
dnc.org.nz/story/30318-29-1.html

Applications for the positions close at 5.00pm on Thursday 25 September.

Mediators

The DRS uses a panel of nine Mediators, assigned to domain name disputes. They attempt to broker solutions to disputes, using facilitation and negotiation skills to find common ground between complainants and respondents.

Each Mediator will be assigned by rotation to a dispute and can expect to handle up to five disputes a year, with a fixed remuneration of \$1,400 per dispute.

Experts

The DRS uses a panel of eight Experts to conduct determinations. They adjudicate between complainants and respondents to determine the rightful holder of domain names under dispute.

Each Expert will be assigned by rotation to a case and can expect to handle up to four cases a year, with a fixed remuneration of \$1,800 per case.

DNCL Board - meeting minutes

A meeting of the DNCL Board was held on 15 August. Copies of the meeting minutes are now available in .html and .pdf format on the Domain Name Commission website.

Impact 08 – Social Interaction

The fifth Impact 08 seminar was run in mid August over the high-speed Access Grid network, with participation from four universities nationwide. Chaired by Donald Matheson of Canterbury University the seminar featured three academics speaking on the impact of ICTs on 'Social Interaction'.

Mary Allan, a post doctoral Fellow in the Social Science Research Centre at Canterbury University, began with a short presentation on video conferencing.

Over the years, this technology has been touted as perfect for cutting down on business travel to increasing collaboration and reducing carbon footprints. But, despite the hype, take-up has been lower than anticipated.

Allan cited a US study which revealed a scant five percent drop in travel through the use of video conferencing. And a recent survey of Access Grid users in New Zealand found strong dissimilarities between video conferencing and face-to-face experience despite 90 percent of respondents acknowledging video conferencing's potential.

A range of measures are required to improve the user experience, says Allan – improved infrastructure, reduced cost, increased user awareness and enhanced system design.

“Simply deploying the technology doesn't ensure uptake. Users want equipment to be inexpensive and easy to use. And they want to be able to seamlessly switch between different tools allowing for flexible, informal and intuitive communications.”

Sociology PhD student Roslyn Kerr followed with an engaging presentation on Second Life, a 3-D virtual world created by US-based Linden Research.

Second Life and other online virtual worlds allow users to adopt entirely new identities, control multiple avatars or jointly control avatars. They also provide opportunities for new forms of social interaction as “alternative selfhoods to real life,” says Kerr.

The final speaker was Brian Pauling from the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology's broadcasting school. He maintains that the trinity of digital convergence, IP and mobility are having a dramatic impact on traditional broadcasting, and is likely to have terminal effects in the long term.

ICTs have also changed the nature of television audiences, with declining overall viewer-ship and very pronounced declines of viewers in the 18-29 cohort.

Broadcasters are battling back by adopting online and mobile technologies such as video-on-demand and mobile TV. But, Pauling maintains they are fighting a losing battle and in the long term are only likely to remain viable in respect of programming news and sporting events.

The next Impact 08 seminar is being held on 15 September and will focus on the impact of ICT on community building.