

Media release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2020
Communications Trust

\$3M digital boost for New Zealand Families

Over 1,500 families from throughout New Zealand will benefit from a Government grant to the Computers in Homes programme.

The grant of over \$3 million is part of the latest round of the Community Partnership Fund, announced yesterday by Ministers Turia and Joyce, and will enable Computers in Homes to work with regional partners to help schools provide computers, internet access and computer training to digitally disconnected families in the Far North, Whangarei, Hamilton, Ngati Porou East Coast, Gisborne, Wairoa, South Taranaki, Wanganui, Porirua and Grey/Buller regions.

The Government's Community Partnership Fund (CPF) focuses on connecting communities and building the confidence of people in using Information and Communications Technology (ICT), providing up to 50% funding for innovative digital initiatives. The balance of funding comes from business and local community partners.

"Digital literacy and smart, connected communities are critical to New Zealand's future and reducing the 'digital divide' is key. This funding is a real win for families in some of the most digitally disconnected areas of the country and provides access to technology they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford," said Laurence Zwimpfer of the 2020 Communications Trust, which coordinates the Computers in Homes programme nationally.

Communications and Information Technology Minister Steven Joyce has also indicated his support for the Computers in Homes programme at a recent commerce select committee meeting, as reported, "Mr Joyce also promised the Government would step up efforts to ensure the 25 per cent to 30 per cent of New Zealanders who do not use the Internet could bridge the "digital divide". He hinted money might be made available in next year's Budget for schemes such as Computers in Homes, run by the 2020 Communications Trust, which provide refurbished computers to disadvantaged communities."¹

"While we are delighted with this CPF funding we recognise there are still around 100,000 New Zealand families with school-aged children who don't have a computer at home. Minister Joyce's comment gives us hope that the remaining families won't miss out," said Mr Zwimpfer.

¹ "Joyce sticks to the script", *The Dominion Post*, 29.06.2009

Computers in Homes started in 2000 and has already provided close to 5,000 New Zealand families with refurbished computers, six months of free internet access, computer training and technical support, via their local schools.

The programme focuses on strengthening links in low income communities between families and schools to lift education levels of children and upskill their parents in using digital technologies.

Parents receive 20 hours of basic computer training including word processing, emailing and using the Internet, conducted at their children's school. The training is aimed at empowering parents to become actively involved in their children's learning, as well as increase their own employment opportunities and confidence. The programme strongly supports the government's focus on literacy and numeracy, as "computers and the Internet are now basic tools for all New Zealanders".

Results from the programme have included employment success, upskilling and promotions in current employment, and continued education in more advanced computer courses.

"Computers in Homes is one of the 2020 Communications Trust's most successful programmes and has been strengthening ICT capability and accessibility in low income and disadvantaged communities for the past eight years, connecting parents with their children's learning and providing families with the skills and confidence to use technology," said Earl Mardle, Chairperson of the 2020 Communications Trust.

Earlier this year the Trust launched the '100,000 Challenge' which aims to connect the 100,000 remaining families with school-aged children but without a computer in their homes, and encourage digital literacy and competence.

"The CPF announcement is an important step towards meeting the 100,000 Challenge and making the 'digital divide' a thing of the past. However there are many more steps to take and we look forward to the continued involvement from the Government and our corporate partners," Mr Mardle said.

Computers in Homes is an initiative of the 2020 Communications Trust with support from the Ministry of Education and the Community Partnership Fund. Schools and families interested in the programme are advised to visit www.computersinhomes.org.nz.

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For more details on the Computers in Homes Programme or to arrange an interview with Laurence Zwimpfer or Earl Mardle, please contact:

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