



31 August 2006

Speech notes

Launch of the Advanced Network

Introduction

Good evening everyone. First, thank you to Donald Clark – Chief Executive of the Advanced Network, for inviting me to speak tonight at this celebration of a very significant event for the research and education communities.

We've been working on the Advanced Network (affectionately known now as KAREN, or the Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network) since 2003 to ensure our research and education sectors have access to an ultra-high speed internet connection that would link them with their colleagues both locally and internationally. This work was initiated by my predecessor, Pete Hodgson, and today represents the culmination of much effort by many people.

Looking around I can see a number of these people who have ensured this project is able to be launched today. In particular I'd like to acknowledge Jim Watson, the founding Chairman of REANNZ and his fellow board members who are now guiding the establishment of the Advanced Network; the representatives from the growing Advanced Network community who have provided advice and services in setting this project up; to the government officials who have worked so hard to make the idea of an ultra high-speed Internet connection a reality. In particular I want to acknowledge the work of the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, particularly Dr Wynn Ingram, in leading this project.

It's great to see such a good representation from the educational and research institutions who've come on board to support the idea of a second-generation internet and who'll be using the Advanced Network to the advantage of New Zealand research.

And finally, my appreciation to the Prime Minister and my fellow Ministers who've been involved in seeing this project through the political process.

We are about to see the Advanced Network become a reality and I thank you all for your dedication to this ideal.

Modern research is multidisciplinary, collaborative research

Research is becoming increasingly complex. Infrastructure and expertise are becoming more specialised, and more and more projects are seeing the collaboration of experts from a wide variety of disciplines who are located not only around New Zealand, but around the world.

Take for example the outstanding Physiome Project, led by our very own Peter Hunter (who incidentally has recently been made a Fellow of the Royal Society) and based at Auckland University's Bioengineering Institute. It is assembling digital models of every system and anatomical feature of the human body. This worldwide initiative has a dozen research teams participating in labs and research institutions across the United States, Israel, Japan and the United Kingdom, involving mathematicians, physiologists, computer scientists and bioengineers.

Given their geographical separation, how do these researchers perform experiments together? How do they transfer large amounts of data, set up discussion groups and establish educational initiatives?

Importance of ICT in multi-disciplinary research

The answer of course lies in having access to state of the art equipment and well functioning information and communication technologies.

That's what the Advanced Network is all about - fast dedicated communications that make knowledge and technology available to our research and education systems and above all, allow them to collaborate with their counterparts throughout the world. In a world of specialisation, both of people and equipment, most organisations cannot afford to invest in often-essential infrastructure but the Advanced Network allows Kiwi organisations to share both a vital piece of infrastructure and their expertise with others around the globe.

I know the research and education sectors are excited about the opportunities the Advanced Network will open to them. There are many projects just waiting to use the technology. Among them are Mark Billingham's HIT Lab – you'll see a demonstration from the HIT Lab shortly, the Australian Synchrotron project, and the Tertiary Education Commission's BESTGrid and BRCSS projects. BRCSS is an initiative to build our social research capability while BESTGrid delivers tools to facilitate collaboration and the sharing of computational resources and online visualisation of instruments and experiments.

I know local participants in NEESit, an organisation that delivers information technology tools and infrastructure for earthquake engineers, which you'll also see in action shortly, are also keen to harness the power of the Advanced Network.

We've also established a Capability Building Fund to provide learning opportunities for users of the Advanced Network. Users will learn how to use the essential components of the Network, such as video conferencing. Workshops, conferences, a website, and links with experts will help users to share learning and to collaborate.

Conclusion

I truly believe that in time, the Advanced Network will transform the way we do research and the way we learn. I sense that many of you here tonight, and of

course other supporters of the Advanced Network, share my sentiments. It offers huge opportunities for us, opportunities that must not be passed up, and I encourage all of you to use it to its fullest potential. I am very much looking forward to seeing the results from projects made possible by the Advanced Network.

Thank you.

