CDHB Enabled by ultra fast fibre

Canterbury District Health Board has chosen local fibre specialist Enable Networks to provide fibre connections to its 20 Christchurch locations – a move that will drastically improve ICT capability and reduce costs for the healthcare provider.

Canterbury DHB Chief Information Officer Chris Dever says the adoption of modern IT practices by Canterbury DHB's clinical staff has driven a significant increase in demand for data connectivity.

He believes the move to Enable's city wide fibre network will boost the reliability of Canterbury DHB's telecommunications services while lifting minimum connectivity speeds from 100Mbps to 1Gbps, and in some cases to 10Gbps.

"Every dollar we can save on telecommunications is a dollar we can spend on patient healthcare and that was a key driver in this decision, along with the efficiencies created," says Mr Dever.

"Canterbury DHB is always looking for innovative ways to optimise its use of new technologies and we are constantly searching for better value for money in the health dollar. We required a robust network to ensure that patients across our facilities receive the best care possible and this has resulted in significant savings."

Mr Dever says by April, CDHB will have moved all significant inter-facility links to Enable's network and will be utilising a double fibre loop to provide network reliability (or redundancy), allowing data to be transported in alternate directions in case of network interference.

"From there I see potential for utilising fibre networks to interconnect all the various health entities in and around Christchurch and even further afield across the South Island," says Mr Dever.

Such a move could involve Enable's fellow members of the New Zealand Regional Fibre Group, creating the possibility of South Island wide fibre connectivity for leading healthcare providers.

Enable CEO Steve Fuller says the project provides the foundation to support the Government's and National Health Board's vision for a connected health environment.

"This agreement with Canterbury DHB is significant for the health sector in Christchurch. Our fibre is now connected to most of the health providers in the city and the network has capability to connect all the remaining primary providers within the next year or so," says Mr Fuller.

Health providers already utilising the Enable fibre network include Christchurch Radiology, Pegasus Health, Nurse Maude, St Johns, CMC, and Medlab. Many others are on board also.

"We will ensure that Canterbury DHB's key sites will have fully diverse fibre to reduce the impact of any potential service interruption," says Mr Fuller.

"Canterbury DHB will provide its own terminating switches and will determine the speed of the network. The initial capacity is up to 10Gbps which means there is potential for CDHB to have a network speed over 100 times faster than it currently has."

Mr Fuller says Enable's network is already close to most of the 20 Canterbury DHB sites with the exception of the fibre route to Burwood Hospital which is currently under construction, signifying further expansion past more businesses, schools and residential areas.

Ultra fast fibre offers the Christchurch health sector the opportunity to exchange high definition imaging, such as radiology, in real time while creating a seamless environment for information and IT between all Canterbury DHB sites.

"The use of our fibre network and associated lift in network speed and capacity for local healthcare providers has meant faster delivery of information and improved patient services," says Mr Fuller.

As Enable prepares for prioritised negotiations with the Government over delivering fibre throughout Christchurch under the Ultra-Fast Broadband Initiative, the company is nearing completion of a 300km fibre network, to which hundreds of businesses, Government organisations and schools are already connected.

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