CHRISTCHURCH SCHOOLS' FIBRE NETWORK LEADS NZ

More than 80 Christchurch schools have contracted Enable Networks to deliver them ultra-fast broadband in the fastest growing and most advanced education network in New Zealand.

Enable Networks expects 60 of these schools to be working on the fibre network in the next few months. By early next year, this number is expected to increase to around 100 schools, almost two-thirds of all Christchurch schools.

Steve Fuller, Enable Networks' Chief Executive, says the connection to schools will operate up to 1,000 times faster than most home and business networks and will cost a fraction of commercial rates.

He says the company's ultimate goal is to connect all Christchurch schools by the end of 2011.

"We have successfully worked with school principals, the Ministry of Education, Canterbury Development Corporation (CDC), and Core Education to show the vital link between technology and delivering meaningful advanced educational and learning outcomes for our children," he says.

"The Enable Schools network will provide many benefits to local schools, including virtually unlimited bandwidth, so they can share content, use video conference technology for virtual classrooms, and access ultra-fast internet for research purposes.

"The ultimate goal of the Enable Schools network is to connect all Christchurch schools to each other, to the rest of New Zealand and to key providers of education resources and services.

"This exciting initiative is an important contributor to the future development of our city, and is already positioning Christchurch a leader in utilising world class technology in our education sector," says Steve Fuller.

Renowned education expert Carol Moffatt has been engaged by Enable Networks' partners to work with Christchurch schools to develop learning and professional development streams using the high speed technology.

A group of Christchurch Schools utilising Enable Networks' fibre and SNAP internet, have already participated in video conferences and virtual classrooms involving students from 19 other countries to exchange views and interact with experts on the topic of climate change and its impact on indigenous people. Itinerant music programs are under development and teaching staff have participated in face to face video work-shops on national standards with Auckland University.

Paul Armitage, Principal of Thorrington School, says Enable Networks' fibre will enhance both teaching and learning.

"The fibre will give us access to ultra-fast broadband, so we can provide our children with advanced learning opportunities," he says. "We will make better use of the internet's data hungry multi-media, such as video conferencing and online learning tools.

"Ultimately, it will open the door on 21st Century teaching and learning which has currently been inaccessible because of the limitations and expense of our current broadband connection," he says.

Christchurch schools connected to Enable Networks' fibre will be eligible to take part in the government's National Education Network (NEN) trial which starts in July. Through the NEN project, schools on high speed fibre networks will be connected to other schools, universities and research institutes around New Zealand, as well as to key online resources.

Enable Networks is a wholly owned subsidiary of Christchurch City Holdings Ltd. Its goal is to provide an ultra fast fibre optic network in Christchurch that transforms the capability and affordability of telecommunications and IT in Christchurch.

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