

Better Broadband for Mapua, Ruby Bay Coast, Moutere?

If you

- live in the **Mapua, Ruby Bay Coast, Moutere** region and
- are interested in **registering your interest in better broadband services** as part of a **local community effort**

please contact the writer, John Fountain, before the end of September at the email address betterbroadbandformrm@gmail.com. John is the contact person for a working party of locals who are developing a strategy for collectively lobbying and negotiating with internet service providers so that we can get high(er) speed broadband, soon. The article below from the September issue of the Coastal News explains who we are and what we are aiming to do.

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While the rest of New Zealand and the world powers ahead in obtaining ultra fast broadband - and the wealth of consumer, business and educational services on the internet this infrastructure enables - most households and businesses in the Mapua, Ruby Bay Coast, Moutere region (MRM) are bogged down with either very slow speed, or no speed, broadband “service”.

This is not acceptable. Many frustrated individual households and businesses like mine have tried one on one negotiating for improved speeds with suppliers like Chorus, Spark and Vodafone to no avail. So seven of us in the MRM region have formed a Broadband Working Party under the auspices of the Mapua & Districts Business Association to try to take some collective action to get better services for businesses and households in our communities . The issue isn’t “ultra fast fibre optic broadband for all” , rather it is about *better* speeds with wider spread VDSL service and *better* access to dispersed users with no access at all in the MRM region.

Recently I had an hour long interview for a well paid and interesting part time job from employers based in Wellington. The interview was supposed to have been a video conference call. As it turned out we might as well have talked on the phone or, in order to make a better impression, I should have flown to Wellington for the interview. Why? Because upload speeds are so pathetic where I live in Mapua that the interviewers were unable to see me at all and download speeds are impossibly slow for any clear video at my end. In a competitive job market where interviews are regularly held online now, how exactly can I sell myself without a visual presence when everyone else applying for that job can?

Mine isn't the only case.

- A local, high level policy advisor engaged with consultants and team members in Wellington, drives from Mapua to Nelson daily to be able to conduct video conference calls with her North Island colleagues, or to upload large files for collaborative work.
- A local IT engineer doing remote diagnostics and software development regularly drives into office space in Nelson/Richmond rather than work online from home
- A photographer/documentary editor and creative artist wanting to upload and download video simply gives up or moves to an office – or home - elsewhere
- Teens and others who enjoy online gaming for entertainment and social connection get stymied when congestion sets in
- Parents of school age children and teens want to be involved with their children's education , an education that increasingly relies on online activity and homework using Google docs for education, YouTube, and learning management systems like Moodle, with a high level of collaboration. There is high speed bandwidth (fibre) at school for children to work with, but not for the children or their parents at their homes.
- An experienced instructor trying to deliver online education services and tutorials domestically and internationally has to abandon their project
- Visiting tourists in local accommodation along the Great Taste trail are told to restrict their video uploads or streaming video downloads
- Households and families wanting access to improved variety and quality of streaming video and television services for education or training or entertainment, give up and end up watching only free to air TV programmes.

If you live in the Mapua, Ruby Bay Coast, Moutere region and are interested in registering your interest in better broadband services as part of a local community effort, please contact me before the end of September at betterbroadbandformrm@gmail.com. Our Working Party group would definitely like to hear from you.

One of our aims is to document and measure the extent of discontent with existing service. Another is to try to assess the magnitude of lost opportunities in jobs, business, education and household entertainment. So we're planning to create a database and a Google map of the MRM region with pins at the addresses of every concerned resident household or business, colour coded by the degree of dissatisfaction with existing service and the numbers of people affected. Our threshold target is 200+ pins, but personally I hope there will be closer to 500+ concerned residents, businesses, contract workers, employees, artists in the region. Finally, we'll take some action to negotiate directly with the broadband service suppliers in our area about getting better service. (We are also working closely with a sub committee of the TDC in a separate process that is currently underway developing a region wide application for contestable Government funding for better broadband and mobile coverage in the region).

Cheers

John Fountain.