



Digital dream realised as cable finally goes live

Thursday September 24, 2020 Written by Emmanuel Samoglou Published in Technology

Few may have noticed, but the Manatua Cable is finally in operation and delivering data from North America, through Tahiti, to internet users in Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

A quiet revolution has taken place as the first bytes of data have travelled across the Pacific through the Manatua Cable to the smartphones and computers of internet users in Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

And with that development, the majority of Cook Islands residents are now connected to the global internet via the 3600 km long Manatua Cable.

It's the culmination of years of effort by government to connect the country to the world through an undersea fiber optic cable, and bring in expected improvements to internet affordability and speed.

There are also hopes the new connection will bring improvements to service and reliability, particularly after a recent string of complaints from customers who reported slower than normal service and intermittent service cuts.

The cable – which connects Cook Islands to French Polynesia - landed on the shores of Rutaki in January and was expected to go live in May, but consumers had to wait through delays as testing and commercial negotiations took place between stakeholders.

Yesterday, Avaroa Cable Ltd announced a partnership with the OPT Group of French Polynesia which allows for the flow of data from North America, through Tahiti, and onward to Rarotonga and Aitutaki – which is connected via a spur of the cable.

“It's a big moment, it's the first time the Cook Islands is connected via cable to the wider world,” said Ranulf Scarbrough, Avaroa Cable's chief executive officer.

“It has the capacity to go on a journey with the nation for the next 25 years.”

Yesterday, download speeds of up to nine megabytes per second were recorded at the offices of Cook Islands News – nearly four times faster than similar tests undertaken last month when the country was connected solely by satellite – but performance was volatile and fluctuated with multiple tests.

Scarbrough said internet users should benefit from decreased latency with the cable – which is the amount of time it takes for data to travel through the network.

At the moment, Vodafone Cook Islands chief executive officer Phillip Henderson said international connectivity is currently being served by cable as well as the O3b satellite system.

Testing is ongoing and he said he expects to see continual improvements in speeds.

“It’s about optimising the best ratio between O3b and ACL,” he said. “What people are experiencing now, there is still room for improvement.”

Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown said the cable will be a key tool for economic diversification, supporting businesses and government, and allow residents to connect to the world with increased efficiency.

“Most importantly, it will open a new era of opportunity for future generations of Cook Islanders,” Brown said.

The Cook Islands segment of the Manatua Cable was funded with a \$15 million grant from the New Zealand government and a US\$15 million (\$22.9 million) loan from the Asian Development Bank.

Source:

<http://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/technology/item/78643-digital-dream-realised-as-cable-finally-goes-live>