

Fibre broadband compared to railway revolution

By Zaryd Wilson

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The fibre broadband network is the modern-day equivalent of building the railways, Amy Adams says.

The Communications Minister was in Wanganui yesterday to officially launch the city's recently completed fibre network on day two of the Beyond Broadband Expo.

A self-described "evangelist when it comes to fibre", Ms Adams said that, like railways, fibre could change how and where people lived.

"It was when we put in those connection networks that allowed us to move our goods around and get things to market easily and suddenly whole areas of the country were opened up to productive use," Ms Adams said.

"Now in a digital world it's the same sort of transformation . . . What it really means is you can be living in Wanganui, or New Plymouth or Gore and you can run a global business . . . and you're doing it on the same footing as anyone in the world."

The average New Zealander now used as much data as the entire country did in the late 1990s. "We can't even imagine today how it will change our lives," Ms Adams said.

"In the same way as when the railways went in, people didn't really understand the how powerful it would be while they were doing it. It was when they looked back people saw it as a turning point. I see this as very much the same."

While the infrastructure was well advanced, getting people using fibre was

FAST FACTS:

- Wanganui's fibre network cost \$23 million to build.
- Wanganui is the 10th town in New Zealand to have its network completed.
- 330km of fibre laid
- 17,000 homes, schools and businesses able to connect.
- About 7 per cent uptake so far in Wanganui.
- 13.8 per cent national uptake.
- The project took just under four years.
- Providers first offered a fibre connection in 2012.

the next challenge. Ms Adams said once people started seeing fibre being used and when more products needing fibre broadband became available, the uptake would increase.

Like mobile phones, fibre would become a must-have, she said.

"Before you had one, you can't imagine why you really need it. Then you get it, you use it for six months, and you'd never be without it."

Ultra-fast Fibre, which was charged with overseeing the fibre network installation in Wanganui, organised this week's expo which continues at the Ucol atrium today.

The expo includes displays and workshops showcasing how people can use fibre broadband.

Ultra-fast Fibre general manager of sales and marketing Richard Riley said



MAKING CONNECTIONS: Communications Minister Amy Adams and Ultra-Fast Fibre CEO William Hamilton were in Wanganui yesterday for the official launch of the city's completed fibre network.
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despite competing with the visit of Prince Harry on Thursday, about 400 people attended day one of the three-day

expo. Wanganui was the first town Ultra-fast Fibre had launched with such an event.

Wanganui mayor Annette Main and MP Chester Borrows opened the expo on Thursday afternoon.