



Media release

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Northland's wireless broadband provider Uber Group takes issue with Vodafone's claim to "break the digital divide"

Northland-based wireless broadband provider Uber Group is querying claims by Vodafone that the beginnings of its rollout under the Government's \$285 million Rural Broadband Initiative is providing "thousands of families with the first opportunity to get good quality broadband".

Uber Group has been providing wireless broadband in rural communities since 2003, and covers Northland from Te Kao to Warkworth and Snells Beach from over 100 transmission sites (see <http://www.ubergroup.co.nz/cov/wireless/>)

Managing Director Hayden Simon says that despite the recent rhetoric, many rural dwellers have been enjoying the same or faster speeds than those available in the cities for several years now.

"Time and time again I hear that there has been no coverage in rural areas and it's simply untrue. We have been working with rural communities since we began, as have other providers around the country."

Mr Simon says his company's service is faster and cheaper than what is proposed by the large competitor. "Our customers enjoy the benefits of stable, symmetric 5 Mbps internet access with optional phone services, compared to the Vodafone offering which has **peak speeds** of 5 Mbps – and that is only on download, while their upload speed is considerably slower.

"Our installation and setup fee is cheaper, as are our monthly package plans, and our maximum data cap is 100Gb compared to their 10Gb."

As well as this, Mr Simon says the enterprise-grade technology Uber Group uses means that in almost all cases, the company is aware of a customer fault before the customer notices it, and often has it resolved without the customer ever being aware of it. "As a result, customers rarely need to call us, which saves them time and means we can put our time and resources into constantly improving our service," he says.

While Mr Simon acknowledges the effort and investment being put into making sure that all New Zealanders have access to fast broadband, he says that he and other regional wireless providers like his company are frustrated that their larger competitors are claiming to offer something that has never been available before.

"More importantly, taxpayers may be paying for broadband infrastructure to be duplicated in areas where there is existing coverage – often better than what is being proposed – that has the capacity to handle all the traffic likely to be generated.

"Small companies like ours – and there are a number of them throughout New Zealand – have taken the risks, raised the money and set up the infrastructure to bring wireless broadband services to where they are most needed, and now we have what in our view is government-funded competition which is not in either ours or the taxpayers' best interests," he says.

"At the very least we want to let people know that there are alternatives and that in many cases they are faster, more cost-effective, and more reliable."

For more information:

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