

# An Internet that benefits

July 2023



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*“Can we start seeing ourselves not as Internet users but network shapers? We create platforms. I am shaping something, not only a user/customer. We need more voice and power.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

## Introduction

This research was commissioned by InternetNZ / Ipurangi Aotearoa. InternetNZ is the home and guardian for the .nz domain. It exists to work for an Internet that benefits all of Aotearoa.

To understand more about what ‘better’ looks like for the people of Aotearoa, InternetNZ commissioned Toi Āria: Design for Public Good and Making Everything Achievable (MEA) to design an enquiry process to hear stories and opinions from a wide variety of New Zealand people about their experience with the Internet.

This report outlines this process and the insights it revealed. These insights have enriched our understanding of what diverse communities want and need from the Internet. They will support InternetNZ to undertake its mahi and better represent all of Aotearoa in trying to advocate for a better Internet.

We propose these insights form the basis for an ongoing conversation with the people of Aotearoa. The Internet is dynamic in form and function, so our response must be the same.

### The partners

Toi Āria: Design for Public Good and Making Everything Achievable worked in partnership to deliver this project on behalf of InternetNZ.

**Toi Āria: Design for Public Good** is a Massey University research centre delivering positive social change through effective community engagement projects. The team at Toi Āria believe that design has a role to play in delivering public good and are interested in how conversations and community engagement can drive social change. Their work aims to connect organisations, government and communities centering the views and needs of the ‘people most affected’.

**Making Everything Achievable** is dedicated to co-creation and working together to achieve transformation and impact. MEA is an intergenerational whānau-led enterprise who work across iwi, the private, public, and social sectors to provide trusted advisory and growth services.

### Literature Scan

The project started with a literature scan, undertaken by Antistatic in April 2022. This scan informed the design of the participatory research carried out by Toi Āria and MEA. The literature scan sought to build understanding around concepts of ‘an Internet for good’ and ‘an Internet that is better for people’.

It pointed towards three key potential areas of enquiry.

- » **A free and open Internet**
- » **Ensuring everyone can access the Internet**
- » **Identifying and mitigating online harms**



## Engagements

With these insights in mind, we designed an engagement process that would help us hear from a wide range of people across Aotearoa. Hearing from those whose voices are often missing from conversations about the Internet was a key part of our design focus. We actively sought to hear from tāngata whenua, Pacific peoples, people living with disability, LGBTQI+ communities, migrant and refugee communities and younger people.

Over the course of 12 months, Toi Āria and MEA hosted multiple conversations about the Internet both in person and online, involving over 140 people. These varied from open Kai & Kōrero sessions with whānau, to facilitated engagements using Toi Āria's 'Comfort Board' methodology. In some cases these two processes were combined.

### The Comfort Board

The Comfort Board methodology is a highly structured process that seeks to elicit the 'lived experience' of everyday people. It offers participants an engaging process for deliberation, acting as a catalyst for conversation. Founded on multiple, complex, layered scenarios it allowed for deep reflection on some of the key tensions and questions emerging from the literature scan. An outline of the scenarios used can be found in the Appendix.

### Kai & Kōrero

Kai & Kōrero sessions were led by MEA and supported by Toi Āria. These kōrero-based sessions sought deeper engagement, and tended to focus on areas of particular importance for Māori.

This report contains the voices of those we spoke to. More than half our participants were Māori; many came from refugee or migrant backgrounds, live with a disability or identify as being part of a marginalised community. We spoke to younger and older people, parents and grandparents, those who've grown up in care and those connected to gang whānau. Here we share their words in anonymous form in order to protect their privacy.

*“Experts won’t give you the answers, it’s from people like this that you’ll get your answers, the grassroots people. Go away and gather together the information from hui like this — it’s the gospel.”*

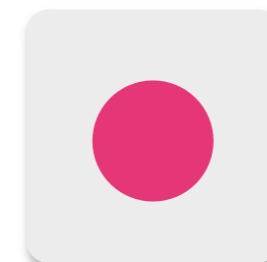
— WHĀNAU VOICE

## What we heard — emerging themes

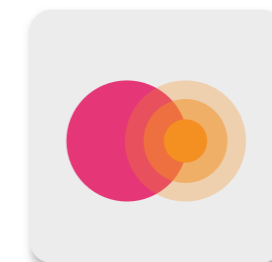
One of InternetNZ’s goals is to make the Internet better for people. Our conversations with diverse communities highlighted some of the ways people are experiencing and thinking about the Internet in Aotearoa. We identified the following themes in what we heard.



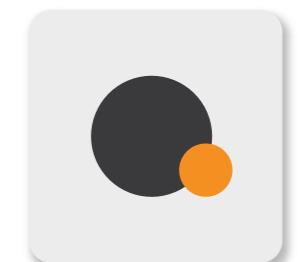
Our Aotearoa context is unique



The Internet is here to stay



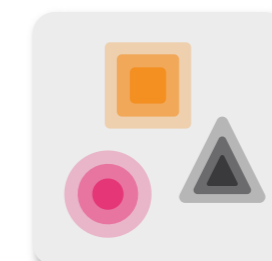
The Internet is changing us



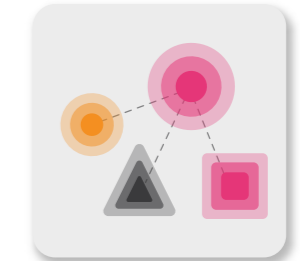
The Internet is not safe for everybody



A better Internet is a more accessible Internet



A better Internet is a more diverse Internet



A better Internet needs better education



## Our Aotearoa context is unique

How might we ensure the Internet uplifts Māori and exemplifies good Treaty partnership?

There is nowhere in the world like Aotearoa New Zealand. The challenges and opportunities of this land are unique — as our responses must be. Māori sovereignty and safety in the online world is an area of particular concern. At the same time, te ao Māori offers rich ways of thinking about the world, and about how humans connect well with each other.

What tikanga is needed in the digital realm?  
 What does ‘an Internet that benefits’ mean when seen through a Te Tiriti lens? How and where might this be woven into all thinking about an Internet that is better for all? What can be done and learned here that can be learned nowhere else in the world?

*“The te ao Māori view is a longer term view and I think sometimes we make decisions in the three-year cycle when we have to look at something like 50 years from now.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*“How do we protect te ao Māori and make sure people don’t make money from things that belong to Māori? Who has ownership of our culture?”*

*“On benefits I’m very high, especially for Māori — for example with tangihanga. There can be some competition with tikanga sometimes but being able to see people over COVID was important, especially for family overseas.”*

*“Tikanga can be put into the Internet. Like with recording tangihanga.”*

*“In the future Māori need to create our own Internet, to keep our own people safe. That’s what I want to see, a Māori Internet.”*

*“I use it for being in contact with whānau, Google, learning, posting about family life. I’m always taking knowledge from the Internet.”*

*“I use the Internet mostly for Facebook. And things like learning about maramataka, Matariki and to connect with iwi. It’s an opportunity to learn about so many things, to keep in contact and to learn about whakapapa.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*“There is a difference between kawa and tikanga. One is tangible and able to be shifted, and the other is to maintain a custom. COVID put the spotlight on that space. We as Māori need to get into that space e.g. data sovereignty and be part of the conversations. Things can be altered and shifted.”*

*“Some things should stay at a marae — but others — like photos — it’s good to see them. I could witness things — like tangihanga. Safe practice guidelines would help us especially for those Māori who don’t get out.”*



## The Internet is here to stay

### How might we lay strong foundations for an unknown future?

The Internet has become an essential component of modern life, and is likely to continue to be so long into the future. What it 'is' and what it 'offers' however, is always evolving. Conversations suggest that levels of trust, understanding and enthusiasm across different communities and age groups vary extensively when it comes to the Internet. Most people can easily articulate the benefits of the Internet as they experience them, but also express discomfort around some of the elements that might be enabling these benefits.

How might we better equip ourselves and future generations to live well with the Internet? What can be done to make the Internet a more trustworthy place for more people as the digital realm continues to develop?

*"I couldn't live without it. You can find everything on the Internet — even love."*  
— WHĀNAU VOICE

*"We cannot divorce this ourselves from this situation because this is how we live now. Our lives are intertwined with digital technology. We're just connected now. Whether or not you're a willing participant you will be forced to participate unless you completely disassociate yourself from modern life"*

*"The Internet isn't always accurate, but I can connect with my family, do online banking and Zoom meetings. You can do anything on the Internet. But my trust is low. The creators of it all, you don't know their intentions."*

*"I can do whatever I want and it comes right to my door — so the benefits are high. It's up to you what you put up there. The Internet has major benefits and I couldn't live without it. If we could change anything, less ads."*

*"The Internet is constantly evolving. Society has also evolved a lot — and people — and what's appropriate/inappropriate has changed."*

*"I don't trust it — whoever runs the Internet can see what you do on there. But there are lots of benefits."*

*"I'm high on the benefits. I see all the different ways it helps whānau — ever since it's been around. Like passive income... I've learned a lot and benefited a lot. I know I'm an optimist. I know there are dark forces but I try not to think too much about them."*

*"You can learn stuff, find places, communicate with people but — nah, I don't trust it."*

*"It's like a sausage — it tastes good and looks good but what's in it?"*  
— YOUTH VOICE

*"The Internet helps my daughter meet people that she can't in real life."*

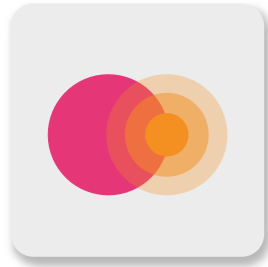
*"The benefits are connecting with friends and family, and making you famous! Trust — well it's up to you and what you upload — cos it stays there on the Internet forever. I reckon I'm pretty safe, I watch what I post. It's common sense really. The Internet could be better though — in terms of protection."*

*"The Internet can be good in ways — it connects you to whānau, you can order food and find out anything you want to. But I kind of don't trust it cos some people can hack into your private stuff and abuse you on the Internet. People can pretend to be you and all you can do is ignore it."*

*"The fact that that data is being collected and analysed makes me uncomfortable inherently."*

*"Benefits for me personally are pretty high, but I don't trust it. There are also benefits for the dodgy people."*

*"In the end, it is a resource. It's super neutral, you could do good or you could do bad — it's up to the person using it."*



# The Internet is changing us

## How might we adapt and learn to navigate it well?

The Internet is fundamentally changing society — enabling and challenging us in innumerable ways. We are becoming more connected, and at the same time less present. There is more we can access, but some of us struggle to access any of it. There are many benefits, but often with many hidden costs.

What can we do as individuals, organisations and communities to adapt our mindsets, our behaviours and our social norms accordingly?

*“Some people use the Internet to hide from being themselves and that is part of what makes the Internet so great. You can hide who you are on there and become somebody else.”*

— YOUTH VOICE

*“It affects people psychologically. How do we future proof our people? We have two worlds now — online and offline. How do we bring up the next generation well balanced? We need to start young. We’re going away from face-to-face engagements — but nothing can take the place of that. Nothing can take the place of our real world.”*

*“Tech always changes us. The Internet is a whakawhanaungatanga killer — when you’re in the same room — and it’s an enabler if you’re apart.”*

*“There are benefits — it’s a business tool, a place to learn things and find out information. You can even communicate in other languages without learning them. But maybe getting all the answers without learning anything is not a good thing.”*

*“When we talk about responsibility, a large portion of it is personal responsibility, but when does it begin to be the governments responsibility?”*

*“I want to understand the addiction side of the Internet. Our rangatahi are so entrenched in the Internet...we weren’t brought up like that.”*

*“Adults try to be children and children try to be adults.”*

*“Everyone’s risk appetite is different. The younger generation are growing up digital. They grew up with social media and technology in their hands since they were kids. They didn’t know anything about the pre-Internet world. They have no idea what it feels like to live in a world where you’re not being tracked all the time.”*

*“We have to learn how and when to turn the switch off and get out there. I’m mindful of the addiction elements, even though there are all the benefits.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*“The Internet is just a piece of wire, but there are people at each end. It’s the people and their behaviour we can’t control. Every time something new is built — people will always find a way around it. Beginning by not trusting is the best way to deal with it.”*

*“I agree about switching it off sometimes. Could there be a thing that turns off on Tuesdays? A kind of Internet ‘sabbath’?”*

*“Our tamariki love the tool that has been provided to upskill them, but human nature has taught us we can be quite terrible to ourselves.”*

*“I have a view that if someone threw a switch — the Internet would mean nothing. It’s not going to teach you how to survive in the bush, find kai and water. For me, with my feet on the ground I know what it takes to survive and I live in that world.”*





## The Internet can be dangerous

How might we minimise harm on the Internet, especially for those who are most vulnerable?

People's experience with the Internet can vary wildly. Many people have experienced harm in online environments, or hold strong concerns for those who may be more vulnerable. It may be the case that a truly 'safe' Internet is an impossibility.

What then can be done to make it safer than it currently is? Whose responsibility is it to do so? And how might we act to better protect those who are most at risk?

*"What do I want it to be? Safe."*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*"My ideal would be for something that is monitored, easy to access and free — all the good stuff without the ads and the danger, but with the same convenience and accessibility. A place where parents don't have to worry."*

*"There is a lot of bullying on social media and the Internet, and sometimes it leads to young people going and hurting themselves, which is extremely sad."*

*"We need more social justice: protecting people who are on the Internet, especially people with disabilities."*

*"I worry about what kids are looking at online. I wish I knew how to monitor that better. I try to have regular conversations, ask them what they are looking at and listening to."*

*"There's a lack of security and safety. There are all these adult layers. There are grooming tools that my kids can't assimilate. They don't understand what's going on — there's leakage. I don't know what to do to control it. We have to be connected, but age appropriateness is harder to control on the Internet than in real life."*

*"You're vulnerable online as much as you are offline."*

*"There's a strong commercial side to the Internet — they want all the details of people and for everything to be open. That's what makes it hard to keep it safe."*

*"I'm all for freedom of speech... but what does it mean when it's inciting violence against minority groups? Misinformation shapes perceptions towards minority groups and creates the opposite environment to one that engenders a safe space and values diversity and inclusion."*

*"We need to address bullying online, especially for people with disabilities."*

— TĀNGATA WHAIKAHA VOICE

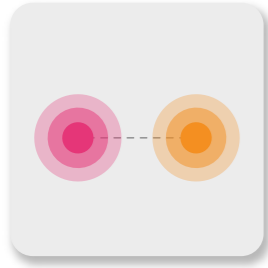
*"I've grown up in South Auckland where there is a high police presence. If you're in these vulnerable communities and vulnerable locations you're more prone to being targeted. We get targeted through things like the Internet, it's like racial profiling."*

*"[The Internet] has its negatives too. Like the police — if they want to find me that can go on my profile and snoop into my private life. They can find out who your associates are. It's way too public. I don't know how to protect myself online or change my privacy settings. People can tap into my personal information."*

*"A governing body that could create safety criteria would be useful. Otherwise disaster is coming. Or maybe we could pay a subscription to an Internet we could be sure was safe."*

*"There needs to be more transparency on how the algorithms are being used to come up with the decisions. They have to explain what they're doing. There's no transparency."*

*"There's ups and downs to the Internet for sure. I understand what you put on the Internet is up to you, but it should be a safe space — instead of worrying about what other people will do with the information."*



# A better Internet is a more accessible Internet

## How might we ensure everyone in Aotearoa can access the Internet with ease?

Access to the Internet has become a necessary part of modern life but barriers remain for many. Infrastructure must prioritise equity of access to services and tools — addressing barriers such as financial, cultural, physical, linguistic and generational exclusion as a priority.

How might we ensure all New Zealanders are able to access and fully participate in the online realm with equal ease? What interventions will enable the people of Aotearoa to be not only consumers of the benefits of the Internet, but active and engaged digital citizens?

*“Increasingly — a lot of things have to be done online. If you don’t have access to the Internet — that’s exclusion.”*

— MIGRANT VOICE

*“Access to the Internet should be reliable, cheap and safe. Reliable in terms of what we are sharing, where they’re using our data, what they are sharing and where. It has to be a cost effective, safe space. We should be comfortable using that space.”*

*“For rules we need something that is easy to access. It’s almost like consent is downloading the app.”*

*“For things like terms and conditions, the language should be easily read, so that people understand what they’re signing up for. They know the audience that they are trying to target with apps, so they should keep up that level of safety for that audience as well.”*

*“What I’ve been experiencing with the communities is that they don’t have access to devices. In lockdown it was extremely difficult for them, because the kids might have a Chromebook from school, but that was the only computer at home. I have lots of parents who say, ‘My kids are just not going to school because they can’t use the Internet, they can’t load it’, or that the child might want to use it and the parents go, ‘Can I use your computer instead?’*

*“We’re seeing a lot of the migrant groups find ways to teach themselves. They teach them things like using the banking apps, because a few of them are stressing out as the physical banks aren’t that accessible, and everything is online. It’s a lot of work. They just need someone to help them in their language and at an appropriate pace.”*

*“There’s families who cannot afford to have access to devices that provide access to the Internet. As a result they cannot participate in the world. We have to be mindful that there’s the online space but getting in there is a privilege. It is a luxury as well as a privilege.”*

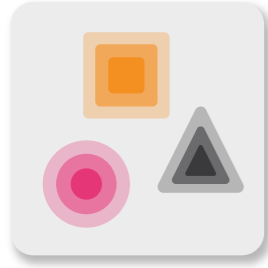
— YOUTH MIGRANT VOICE

*“There are issues around the accessibility of the Internet. It should be free. People should be able to use it without having to pay so many bills. Access to the Internet shouldn’t have a price on it. The revenue that is made is wrong. We need better infrastructure.”*

*“Phones and things are expensive. It’s hard enough to buy books for school, now it’s all tablets and people just don’t have that sort of money. And then things go out of date quickly.”*

*“When I buy a new computer I always have to buy all the software that goes with it. You shouldn’t have to pay for all the extras. Technology is expensive. They are amazing devices, but they are also expensive to run and maintain. I have chromebooks for all six kids but I can’t afford the virus software. It costs us \$100 a month for Internet access.”*

*“In a lot of our former refugee and migrant communities, the language barrier is huge so that would have to be a big consideration. Accessibility would have to be free. Who would be the best person to deliver? Would it be government responsibility or community groups?”*



## A better Internet is a more diverse Internet

How might a greater diversity of people in Aotearoa be part of shaping the Internet?

Power is not evenly distributed on the Internet. Some people and communities are poorly represented when it comes to how, when and where decisions are made. If Aotearoa is a multicultural society built on a bicultural foundation, how might our Internet better represent and reflect this?

What supports will enable a greater diversity of voices to be heard where it matters? How might we enable more agency and power for all users of the Internet, whatever their background?

*“Can we start seeing ourselves not as Internet users but network shapers? We create platforms. I am shaping something, not only a user/customer. We need more voice and power.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*“I want something that is equitable, ethical and has a strong sense of empathy. An online space that enables positive online connected communities and a sense of belonging.”*

*“Not until the Internet becomes more collectivist will it feel OK — at the moment we are giving everything away.”*

*“A lot of people don’t understand our special needs people are just the same but with different needs.”*

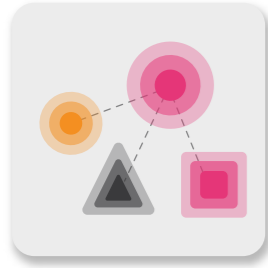
*“A lot of the voices are the loudest voices and don’t seem to come from those who are most impacted by a lot of decisions made in the online space. We need to get them involved.”*

*“Wherever there’s Māori there’s tikanga — in this day and age it comes back to the individual, how you were raised is what you know, how you engage going forward.”*

— WHĀNAU VOICE

*“On our marae and at the urupā you can take pictures and post them. Each hapū and iwi can make their own rules. We need to have some guidelines to keep our people and our mokopuna safe.”*

*“I would say this Internet thing is not my generation’s thing. These things are to me like a burden. But for my kids, they are now grown up, and they control everything — my bank account, my password, everything, they remember for me and I leave it to them.”*



## A better Internet needs better education

### How might we improve digital literacy and education in Aotearoa?

Many people feel under-equipped to make the most of the Internet, whilst keeping themselves and others safe while they do so. The attractions of the Internet are many, yet the skills and knowledge required to ensure safety and security online can be hard to access.

How might we enable better — and ongoing — education for all users of the Internet? Whose role is it to provide and manage this education? What role might there be for intergenerational learning? In a rapidly evolving environment, where is there a duty of care incumbent on organisational or state actors, and where is the onus on individuals to consider personal responsibility?

*“Older people may not know as much about the Internet as people who are 17 or 18. Maybe you have to have a certain level of ‘knowing the Internet’ to be able to teach it.”*

— YOUTH VOICE

*“I think we’re in a funny generation where we are educating up and down. We were born into technology, whereas the younger ones are born into the Internet, and our parents are neither. We have the best of both worlds to navigate and support.”*

*“Increasing people’s digital literacy. So many parents, like my dad, didn’t get Facebook until a couple of years ago, and I had to be the one teaching him... So it’s sort of a reverse education.”*

*“The Ministry of Education should provide expert advice and guidance, co-designed with parents and students.”*

*“I guess it’s about educating everyone about the risks of putting something out online and that it could go viral and shit can happen.”*

*“It makes you think about, in terms of level of literacy and capability, whether they’re a child, or an adult who has a language barrier, or just didn’t grow up with the Internet, how much of it do they require that to be imposed, because they don’t have that level of knowledge, capability and awareness. Do people need it to be imposed on them?”*

*“Clarify and protect — those are the most important things. And awareness — that’s the biggest challenge.”*

*“We need education about how people leave digital footprints online. People forget that sometimes you can delete something, but it’s still there.”*

— MIGRANT VOICE

*“Growing up in an ethnic household and an ethnically diverse community there are resources out there, but they’re not made or targeted to people who aren’t aware of how the Internet works. It’s quite hard to explain these new concepts to my mum and my dad, with my limited ability in their native language. It would be better to have resources that are available in a range of languages. Having resources that are inclusive and friendly.”*

*“We need better education — about scams and what is real and what isn’t.”*

*“There are better ways to learn about the Internet than getting harassed online.”*

## Concluding thoughts

We are all learning how to live well with the Internet. For better or for worse, it affects and influences all our lives — and is likely to do so far into the future.

Our conversations with New Zealanders across the motu show a high level of engagement with the opportunities, tensions and challenges that the Internet offers. The pace of change is rapid and the future unknown, but we are a resilient, adaptable, creative people — aware of our past, and mindful of our future.

A better Internet will be equally accessible for everyone in Aotearoa. It will be shaped by a greater diversity of voices — and better digital literacy education for all must be a priority. Above all, 'an Internet that benefits' means one that leads to better lives for all. In an Aotearoa context that means an Internet that upholds Te Tiriti and supports Māori aspiration.

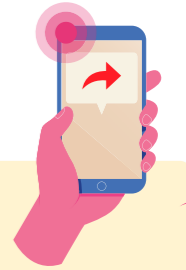
**This journey of learning and adapting will continue.  
We must travel forwards, together.**



# Appendix 1

## Scenarios

## Keeping safe online



### 1a Sharing video content online

Your nine-year-old sibling (child / grandchild / niece) is doing a classroom project where they've been asked by their teacher to make team videos about the current classroom topic — climate change.

The students and teachers are excited about building their storytelling and digital skills and reaching their local school community.

The teacher uses their school's social media account to share the videos, tagging parents and friends of the school in the posts. They have permission to share content from a blanket permission form signed at the beginning of the school year allowing use of class content (photos / videos) on the school social media pages.

### 1b Influencer promotion

One of the class teams makes a video which features the climate change actions of an international online celebrity with millions of followers.

That evening one of the parents tags the celebrity when re-sharing the post. The next day the teacher and children are excited to see that their post has been liked 68,000 times overnight. They find out that the influencer has reposted the original post and made a shout out to the class and school on their feed.

### 1c Unintended consequences

It's one week later and the video has gone viral since being shared by the influencer. The video addresses a climate science topic that has become a passionate debating point for people online — and a source of misinformation.

People begin leaving angry and abusive comments under the video, including ugly insults about the children who made it.

The school takes the video down from all its social media accounts, but the content is still easily accessible online and the trolling of the content continues for weeks. The Board of Trustees shuts down all the school social media accounts after receiving dozens of parent complaints.

# Digital footprints



## 2a Data collection and data points

You and your partner are regular online shoppers and love second-hand trading. You have numerous shared online shopping accounts and an impeccable trading record you've worked hard to maintain.

One of your recent hobbies is home-brewing. You've started purchasing citric acid for your home brew. Your partner, a home-based hairdresser purchases hydrogen peroxide monthly via your shared account.

One day you get a flag that your account has been temporarily frozen but no other information. The regularity of the two chemicals you've been purchasing (citric acid and hydrogen peroxide) cause an automated digital flag with the Police Counter Terrorism Unit as two ingredients commonly used in homemade explosives.

## 2b Fake profiles

The Counter Terrorism Unit starts an inquiry into you, your partner, and the online suppliers of the chemicals using a fake social media profile. The fake profile provides them with identity cover and allows them to follow you on your numerous publicly listed social media and professional networking accounts.

The Unit quickly works out that you are in fact an enthusiastic home brewer and your partner is a hairdresser and nothing more sinister. This all occurs without your knowledge. The flag is removed from your digital account and you continue to trade.

# Who's responsible?



## 1a Personal responsibility

You are a competent digital citizen and use the internet for your professional life and in many daily interactions. You've noticed an emerging trend in your social media environment where friends and connections are starting to insist on certain 'better' behaviours from users. The push from your friends seems to be about making interactions 'more rewarding' for all.

You notice that rather than endless ads and influencer videos you're starting to see visual cues online that provide suggestions for how to behave —these include slogans such as 'Make everyone feel welcome' and 'Connect well and with kindness' and 'Whakawhanaungatanga works online too'. The prompts have made you check your actions a number of times.

## 1b Global responsibility

Six months later the global tech giants make an announcement. They propose instituting a set of guidelines for all advertising on their platform requiring a digital trail to provide transparency around who is funding each ad and providing a clear statement of intent.

The aim is that this global initiative will start as a voluntary requirement and within a year will be legislated in the countries that sign on.

## 1c Government responsibility

Eighteen months later you notice a new internet campaign that is being rolled out by the government. The campaign asks users to treat the internet space like a public space — reviving the 'Be a Tidy Kiwi' with a 'Be a Good Kiwi Online' — reminding New Zealand people that being a guardian of places includes online spaces. That means tidying up 'rubbish' language, keeping family and friends safe, and reminding users that values we uphold in our personal lives should be continued online. The campaign is the precursor to new proposed legislation which is recommending a penalty system in which the government will police online behaviours and will close down internet access to those who have high infringement rates.

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