

6 December 2023

PO Box 11 181
Level 13, 18 Willis Street,
Wellington 6011,
New Zealand.

Office: +64 4 555 0123
office@internetnz.net.nz

internetnz.net.nz

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon Melissa Lee
Minister for Economic Development
Minister for Media and Communications

Hon Judith Collins
Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology

Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Re: InternetNZ briefing to incoming Ministers - Internet Governance

Dear Ministers,

1. Congratulations on your appointments.
2. InternetNZ | Ipurangi Aotearoa operates the .nz domain space. We ensure all domain names ending with .nz are available for people and businesses in Aotearoa to function and thrive online. This is critical infrastructure for communities, businesses and every citizen of New Zealand and we are proud to provide it on behalf of us all. We're not government funded — we're a self funded incorporated society. The money we receive from .nz domain names funds the significant infrastructure required to operate .nz and a portion goes back into the community. We provide grants, help to fund other organisations, and advocate for an accessible and safe Internet that benefits everyone in Aotearoa.
3. We can support you as Ministers by providing expertise and an independent perspective on Internet issues, and the ability to engage across the digital ecosystem.

4. In this letter, we share our thoughts on the importance of prioritising and resourcing New Zealand engagement in international Internet governance processes.

An open, free and secure Internet requires effective ‘Internet governance’

5. The Internet has transformed our world, connecting people and businesses across borders, and enabling innovation and progress. It is a powerful tool for social, economic and cultural development, and underpins all aspects of daily life. One estimate of the financial impact of taking the world offline for 24 hours is USD\$43 billion; New Zealand alone would be NZD\$158 million.¹
6. The Internet, as a network of networks, is governed through collaboration within a set of distributed and overlapping international organisations and processes that are critical to its operations. This is ‘Internet governance’.² It is what ensures that the Internet we have exists, and continues to work effectively, so that the New Zealand government, businesses and communities can connect to each other and the world.
7. The multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance³ sees governments, the private sector, the technical community and civil society all participate to develop and apply principles, policies, norms and rules that shape the use and evolution of the Internet. It is a proven model for responding to the complex and dynamic policy and technical challenges that the Internet has presented. It leads to outcomes that have considered a full range of perspectives and have broad support, and is the basis of an open, free, secure, and globally interoperable Internet.

The current model of Internet governance may be under threat

8. As the Internet has become increasingly central to societies and economies, some governments have started to seek greater control over its governance, with debates increasingly influenced by geo-political power dynamics.
9. There are several inter-governmental processes taking place in the next two years that could result in significant and irreversible changes to the current multistakeholder Internet governance model. This risks not only the

¹ [Pulling the plug on the internet for a day - what it would cost the world? | ITP Techblog](#)

² [Agenda for the Information Society – Tunis 2005](#)

³ [Internet Governance - Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works](#)

benefits associated with the model, but also the universality, openness, and freedom of the Internet itself. These processes include the Global Digital Compact⁴, expected to be agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, and the 20 year review of the 2003-2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20)⁵ due to take place in 2025.

New Zealand needs to be engaged in Internet governance processes

10. New Zealand needs to be present and active in Internet governance processes and forums in order to help defend and sustain the multistakeholder approach to an open and secure Internet, and to help shape the Internet's development in a way that benefits New Zealand and aligns with our values.
11. This is especially important for the inter-governmental processes taking place in the next two years, as these are not processes that are accessible to non-government stakeholders such as InternetNZ. We have the capacity, competency and connections in this space to support your officials and help provide the views of New Zealand's Internet communities.
12. As a Country Code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) name provider we are a member of the technical community in the Internet governance networks. We will always focus on maintaining and developing an open, free and secure Internet and work for that here in Aotearoa and internationally.
13. New Zealand has a high profile on Internet issues due to work on the Christchurch Call, and a general reputation in Internet governance spaces as a practical, fair and people-centred player. This creates an opportunity, which we know would be welcomed by many internationally, for strong engagement by New Zealand on global Internet issues and governance.

Agencies need to be well resourced and coordinated between themselves and with stakeholders

14. Your agencies have responsibilities for overlapping Internet governance issues and processes in a range of international forums including ICANN⁶, the ITU⁷, the OECD, multiple mechanisms of the United Nations, Internet

⁴ [Global Digital Compact | Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology](#)

⁵ [World Summit on the Information Society](#)

⁶ [The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#)

⁷ [The International Telecommunication Union](#) -

technical bodies such as the IETF⁸ and a growing list of intergovernmental and multistakeholder initiatives.

15. This work needs to be resourced properly within agencies to ensure the deep ongoing engagement with the issues, actors and processes that is necessary to achieve impact. Coordination between the agencies involved, and consultation (and collaboration where appropriate) with non-government stakeholders such as InternetNZ is also essential to support consistency and effectiveness of action.
16. For some time now we have not seen the Ministerial leadership that would prioritise this work. Strong leadership would support and resource government agencies to coordinate effectively and participate fully in Internet governance forums, networks or processes.

InternetNZ can help

17. We can support you and your officials in a number of ways in Internet governance work, including by:
 - providing read outs and insights to your officials from the international Internet governance communities and processes we already engage in that they may not be present at — we are working closely with our counterparts in Australia, Canada and the UK
 - collaborating with your agencies so that we can work efficiently and strategically in the processes we are both engaged in — we will be in contact with your officials
 - helping to convene the New Zealand Internet community so that New Zealand's positions in this space can reflect the multiple perspectives held by New Zealanders, and model the multi stakeholder approach New Zealand seeks to champion.
18. So often our attention in the Internet is grabbed by the content layer (like apps and new technology) or by the challenges of getting the Internet to people (like the cables, devices and connectivity). Today, we are asking you to also consider the work that goes into the protocol and policy level of the Internet so that it is interoperable globally, open and secure for everyone.
19. Please prioritise these issues and ensure your agencies have the mandate and resources to engage in this work towards an Internet that benefits New Zealand and its people.

⁸ [The Internet Engineering Taskforce](#)

20. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this, and will be in contact with your offices to arrange a time.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivien Maidaborn', written in a cursive style.

Vivien Maidaborn
Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive