

SMART ECONOMY GRANT

Supporting innovative ICT commercial ventures

SMART Economy grant supports a bright new digital future for Araura TV & Radio

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce that the Government's SMART Economy Initiative (SMART) is helping Aitutaki's local television network make the leap from analogue to digital transmission. The SMART grant will enable Araura TV & Radio to use connectivity provided by the Manatua Cable to share locally produced TV content across multiple channels, around the region and to the world. Araura TV & Radio has been operating on a small scale for over 10 years but has been limited in what they can do while using an analogue system. Moving to digital will enable them to have multiple channels and to become a financially viable operation. Araura TV & Radio owner Nick Henry says Araura TV's role is basically to educate and inform: "Having our own programming with locally produced content improves the well-being of our people. We will now be able to expand to have four new chan-

nels, covering news, spiritual well-being, sport and entertainment, and tourism and commerce – to meet the needs of Aitutaki residents, locals, and visitors. I believe the long-term benefits of recording events, storytelling, and capturing our history only increase in value as the years go by." The four new TV channels will be free to air and Nick intends to increase the amount of local content over time, building up to 10 channels. As smart phones record in a digital format, Araura TV's move to digital also provides opportunities to use 'from the street' stories from local contributors and reporting via smart phone technology. It will also springboard many other opportunities that a developed TV network brings – including to become financially self-supporting and expand to employ more Cook Islanders. In addition to securing SMART funding, Nick has also reached out to Pasifika TV in New Zealand and they have been very happy to provide what support they can.

"We are already working closely with the technical support team at Pasifika TV, and they will provide advice and help us get our new digital operation up and running as smoothly as possible," Nick says. Once an International broadcast TV standard is met, Araura TV will even be able to market content to TVNZ, ABC Australia, and other overseas networks. It looks like this much-loved local TV station has a very bright new digital future.

