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Labour and Green Party ICT Policies

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"To see one of NZ's two main parties finally recognise the immense value free and open source software contributes to our economy - and make it a core part of their election platform - is a very encouraging step".

So says Dave Lane, President of the NZ Open Source Society (NZOSS), in response to Labour's released ICT policy [9]. In that policy Labour makes it clear that open source software will be at the heart of Government ICT.

"Although the value of free and open source software has long been recognised [10] by the Greens, this election marks the first time that one of New Zealand's two main parties has promoted free and open source software in particular and taken such a pro-active stance on IT in general" continues Lane. "It demonstrates that we've made the transition into mainstream consciousness."

Both Labour's and the Green's ICT policies would help New Zealand make up ground where it has been falling behind the rest of the world: co-ordinated and decisive adoption of open and enabling technologies. The UK, for example, has published a toolkit [11] to further enhance the open source adoption capability of that Government and in Australia AGIMO recently updated their policy [12] mandating a preference for open source software in government procurement.

A restated commitment from both parties to exclude software from patentability and modernise Copyright legislation - in spite of the substantial pressure being applied by US corporate interests through devices like the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement (TPPA) - is also encouraging to Society members and to the kiwi software industry as a whole.

Open source, sharing, collaboration, diversity of supply and an "open source centre of excellence" are policies that are good for the tax payer, good for local suppliers, and good for New Zealand.

The NZOSS welcomes Labour's and the Green's decisive positions on Free and Open Source Software and their appreciation of the social and commercial implications of patent and copyright legislation. We also applaud the wide consultation and deep thinking that has gone into developing these policies. They mark a welcome departure from the status quo.

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