



New Zealand Open Source Society

President's Annual Report

19th August 2009

It is worth repeating the opening paragraph from my last report:

It seems to have been a busy year for the NZOSS and free and open source software in general. There has been a lot of progress made in the goals of the society despite the very limited resources at our disposal. The biggest problem we face is having the people and time to work on and follow up the many opportunities now raising their heads.

The highlights have been:

- Software Freedom Day
- Strategic Planning
- Richard Stallman Visit (which will be reprised in October 2009)
- Lobbying on the Copyright Amendment Act
- Submissions on Legislation
- Submissions on ACTA
- NZ Open Source Awards
- G2009 Negotiations and fall out
- Opposing a Microsoft Patent.

Software Freedom Day 2008

When Jayne Wallis of Unlimited Potential offered to organise an SFD 2008 in Wellington I little realised just how efficient an organiser she was and what a wonderful event would be put on. With some cornerstone sponsorship from CWA New Media, the Wellington Town Hall and Michael Fowler centre were obtained for a day of barcamp, instalfeast and tech talk goodness. Over 200 people showed up covering a broad spectrum of interests. The Government CIO, Laurence Miller, was perhaps the most noteworthy attendee but representatives of many levels of the government, business and hacker communities made this a really diverse and interesting event.

For the NZOSS came a challenge from the floor to define ourselves clearly and to understand and communicate our goals and objectives. This challenge set up a programme of work that continues today.

SFD 2009 planning is well underway in several centres. The Wellington event will include several streams for children and students which will make the dynamics of the event even more interesting than ever.

Strategic Planning

Guided by senior consultant, John Rankin, the NZOSS has had a series of strategic planning sessions. This identified several key areas of interest and projects to work on. The final sessions have followed a process of "Investment Logic Mapping" which helps clearly define our reason for existence and the benefits we seek to realise through the increased usage of FOSS in New Zealand. Once this process is complete the results will be put to the wider NZOSS membership and community for further discussion.

Copyright Amendment Act

Last year's low point was unexpectedly turned around. Furious lobbying of the fading Labour government by many parties including the NZOSS lead to a real breakdown of relations between the responsible minister and those opposed to the bill. However, the formation of the Creative Freedom Foundation and the well run campaign by that group has turned things around considerable. Long term it is clear now that there is a loud counter voice in New Zealand to the "Intellectual Property" monopolists who seem to have so much control over policy making and legislation.

Submissions on Legislation and ACTA

We have made written and oral submissions on S92 of the Copyright Act and more recently on the Patent Amendment Bill currently in select committee. Details of all the submissions are on our web site. Some time has also been spent meeting with MED officials and the then Minister, Judith Tizard, to discuss the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. The NZOSS supported a submission on the topic by Mark Harris and we continue to submit on the topic to MED.

New Zealand Open Source Awards

The second NZ Open Source Awards took place. Again it was a great opportunity to highlight the FOSS work being undertaken in New Zealand and by New Zealanders.

Congratulations to all the nominees, finalists and winners of the awards.

G2009 Negotiations and fall out

One of key areas of interest identified in our strategic plans has been the all of government licensing negotiations with Microsoft. Started late in 2008 the negotiations culminated in a failure to achieve any significant discounts through a centralised procurement process. This left many central and local government agencies with no time to prepare themselves for direct negotiations with Microsoft. To say the outcome has been sub-optimal for New Zealand is a colossal understatement. The lack of preparedness and the fact that alternative choices have hardly been looked at, let alone properly evaluated was a serious dereliction of duty by those responsible for spending tax payers money wisely.

The NZOSS is looking to find ways to help agencies avoid finding themselves without choices in the future. We expect to make a public announcement on this line of work in the near future.

FOSS in Education

There have been some interesting developments in the uptake of FOSS in schools. Two schools in particular have converted completely to FOSS whilst hundreds of others use Linux servers, Moodle and other FOSS application. These are small beginnings and the potential for FOSS to have a significant impact on educational outcomes has barely been scratched. However, it is fair to say that the Ministry of Education has been supportive of schools exploring these sort of options.

Members of the NZOSS have both at a business and individual level taken it upon themselves to support and encourage schools using FOSS and we are beginning to see the production of support collateral appearing.

Opposing an MS Patent

This long drawn out process continues. Microsoft were recently granted the same XML patent in the USA. We are not simply opposing this patent because we are opposed to patents, we believe that the data users

generate, whether by public agencies or private citizens, should belong to those entities, not to whoever happens to hold a patent on the methods of creating and accessing that data. This is an issue of national sovereignty that should be treated very seriously.

Focus for the Coming Year

There are a number of areas I would like to focus on in the coming year. These include:

- Membership debates on NZOSS' strategy and plans
- A focus on key areas where we can make a measurable difference
- Focus on the use of FOSS in education and in particular in schools
- Running more NZOSS events in conjunction with other groups such as Unlimited Potential.

Acknowledgments and Thanks

I just want to thank the NZOSS Committee and our members for their work this year.

I would like to congratulate committee member Matthew Holloway for marrying Bronwyn and their subsequent success with the Creative Freedom Foundation.

Thanks again to Mark Foster and David Lane for keeping the NZOSS mailing lists and website going.

Finally, many thanks to John Rankin who has brought a rigour and process to our activities that will stand us in good stead for many years to come.

Freedom

Freedom is the capacity to determine your own choices.

The NZOSS is about building that capacity.

Don Christie

President

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