

## Rural Women New Zealand

Mission Statement: Strengthening Rural Communities

- Rural Women New Zealand set up 80 years ago to help rural women and families
- 300 groups around the country
- Advocate for rural communities on social, educational, infrastructure and health issues
- We give scholarships and bursaries
- We publish Rural Bulletin
- We are the sole shareholder in a home healthcare business
- This year we launched the RWNZ Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009



Good afternoon,

My name is Wendy McGowan, and I am a national councillor with Rural Women New Zealand. As you can see from this slide our organisation has been around a long time, having started 80 years ago as the Women's Division of the Farmers Union, later to be renamed Women's Division Federated Farmers. Ten years ago we changed our name to Rural Women New Zealand.

I am very pleased to be able to speak with you today, particularly as our organisation's Mission Statement is "Strengthening Rural Communities".

If there is one single thing that could be done at this point in time to strengthen rural communities, it would be to give every household, every farm and every rural enterprise access to fast, affordable broadband.

We have recently seen positive moves in that direction, with a \$75 million shot in the arm for rural broadband in the last Budget and the recent announcement of cheaper satellite broadband.

These developments cannot come soon enough as rural New Zealand has so much to offer but is hindered by the present lack of broadband coverage and unaffordability for many rural people.

Rural Women New Zealand fully supports the aim of this symposium in putting together a strong business case for rural broadband. Today we will share with you a specific business area that has required creative solutions due to lack of broadband coverage.

But first I would like to tell you a bit about our Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009, which also seems very relevant to today's topic.

## Rural Women New Zealand

- Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009

- Celebrating the success of rural women entrepreneurs
- Supporting and encouraging small rural businesses
- Recognising the extra difficulties rural women face to succeed in business
- Award to be presented at the Grand Hall of Parliament on 15 May 2009



In setting up the RWNZ Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009, we aim to support and encourage small businesses run by women in a rural setting.

Many of these women will have jumped extra hurdles in order to set up their businesses and we applaud them for that. Geographic isolation, extra transport costs, and of course staffing issues all play a part.

To run a successful rural business, we are certain these enterprising rural women will also have had to find solutions to the rural broadband issue, be that connecting via wireless if possible, or meeting the extra cost of a satellite connection.

To be successful in businesses today, broadband is not a 'nice to have' it is a 'must have'. Businesses need access to fast email to keep in touch with clients, and to the internet to make online payments, source products and materials and so much more. There are a myriad of ways in which businesses run more smoothly and efficiently when connected to broadband.

If broadband was universally available at an affordable price, we are sure we would see a rise in rural enterprise as it would help to overcome one of the biggest barriers to working efficiently and effectively in today's business world.

So now I would like to talk to you about a businesses situation that Rural Women New Zealand has direct knowledge of where the lack of rural broadband coverage has required a costly workaround to implement technological efficiencies in the business.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

Wal and Dog head off into the sunset



"The End"



But first, let's check out this well known rural character and what he's up to these days.

This is the final picture from the very last Footrot Flats cartoon, as Wal walks off into the sunset along with his faithful dog, "Dog".

Murray Ball gave up the cartoon in 1994 when his own dog, which had been the inspiration for the character in the cartoon, died.

Though Wal didn't appear to **age** during the many years the cartoon was running, he, just like his dog, was clocking up the years and heading towards a time when he might have needed a bit of extra help around the home.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

So where are the Footrot Flats characters now?  
And who is looking after them in their twilight years?



Here we are at the Rural Women New Zealand Conference. We're doing fine with help from the nice people from Access Homehealth.



So where is the Footrot Flats team now?

**They were last seen at the Rural Women New Zealand National Conference in Blenheim in May!**

And who **cares** now that Wal, Cooch and Cheeky Hobson are no longer in the limelight - growing older and getting a bit creaky?

**Rural Women New Zealand cares.**

**Just as we have cared for thousands of other rural New Zealanders through our homecare scheme, which has now evolved into a standalone business, Access Homehealth Limited.**

And it is information about that business and the way it operates despite the lack of reliable broadband in rural areas, that I would like to share with you today.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- RWNZ's long homecare history
  - 1927: Emergency Housekeeper & Bush Nurse Scheme set up (WDFW homecare scheme)
  - 1999: Access Homehealth Limited established
  - Key focus: Rural clients





In 1927 Rural Women New Zealand (then known as the Women's Division Farmers Union) set up an **Emergency Housekeeper and Bush Nursing Scheme**, which provided reliable help when women were ill or needed assistance in the home, such as when babies were born.

These 'fairy godmothers of the backblocks' were a godsend helping save lives and supporting women to keep the household going during an emergency.

This service has now grown into a standalone, professionally-managed nationwide home healthcare business, **Access Homehealth Limited**, which is solely owned by Rural Women New Zealand.

It provides a variety of home-based services where age, disability, illness or accident make such support necessary, providing personal care and domestic help as well as more specialised nursing services.

While there are several organisations providing these services in New Zealand, Access Homehealth's point of difference is that it focuses on **rural home healthcare**.

Home healthcare services are particularly important for rural people where alternative local services such as rest homes are not available. Enabling Wal, Cooch and their mates to live down on the farm or nearby in their twilight years means they can stay in the community where they have been active during their working lives, where they are known and where they can stay in touch with families, friends, neighbours and other familiar support systems.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- Access Homehealth Ltd today:
  - 12,000 clients
  - 2,500 homecare workers
  - 60 nurse co-ordinators
  - Ministry of Health funded






Today Access Homehealth Limited provides a variety of home-based services to over 12,000 clients, making the business one of the largest home healthcare providers in the country.



Its funding comes from the Ministry of Health's budget, but it operates on a not-for-profit basis, setting it apart from many other providers who are required to return a profit to their shareholders.

One thing that hasn't changed is its emphasis on **rural**. Working in the rural sector has certainly brought added challenges, not the least being transport costs and the lack of broadband coverage.

The company therefore have a strong focus on identifying cost savings and efficiencies, particularly through the use of technology, so that funding can be spent on clients' care, rather than paperwork and bureaucracy.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- The Challenges for Access Homehealth Limited
  - Balancing a tight operational budget 
  - Cutting down paperwork 
  - Better information sharing 



Four years ago Access Homehealth started to look for a technological solution to cut down on paperwork and improve information sharing.

Its prime focus was on converting from a paper-based record keeping system, to a computer-based one. There had to be a better way of managing the paperwork and information that was collected about people in order to improve their care.

And there's certainly plenty of record-keeping required, particularly for the nursing staff who visit clients up to four times a year to conduct assessments and put in place care plans which are then implemented by homecare workers.

Until recently nurse co-ordinators were required to fill in approximately 30 pages of hand-written forms for each visit, with time wasted on replication to meet different reporting requirements.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- The Solutions:
  - Computer-based client information
  - The company's first choice: a web based system
    - Secure sites for uploading and downloading data
    - Visiting nurses able to update records in 'real time'
    - Information sharing / access to medical records from other healthcare services
  - But – Poor broadband coverage meant web-based system not an option



Clearly the company needed a central repository of information that could be accessed by nurses and placement co-ordinators as required at any time.

First it went to the market to see if there was anything that could be used, but the available systems were all internet based - great in urban environments where you could guarantee a permanent internet connection through a datacard, but unusable in rural locations due to the unavailability of broadband internet coverage in many areas.

This was disappointing. Had the company been able to take advantage of web technology, it could have set up a secure site where its nurse co-ordinators could have uploaded or downloaded client data as they worked.

A web based system would have given immediate access to a client's records as and when required, and would also have meant the updating of records in 'real time' during the nurse's visit, which would have been fast and efficient.

Going forward it could also have facilitated information sharing and access to medical records with other healthcare services involved with that client, such as DHBs.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- “Access Controller” - A non-web-based rural workaround:
  - Offline client databases held on laptops
  - Master database updated at end of each day
  - Electronic forms pre-populated with known data



So with a web based solution not an option in today's rural broadband environment, the company's in-house technology gurus came up with an innovative, though relatively costly workaround by creating an offline centralised client database system known as “Access Controller”.

The database system runs on very basic laptops, allowing nurses to access the past and present history about a client, as well as updating records.

Each laptop has a subset of the master database, covering the region in which that visiting nurse co-ordinator is working. Currently there are 60 sub-databases that can run without needing to talk to the master database for periods at a time.

However, as soon as the laptop is connected to the Access Homehealth network through a datacard or when it is returned to the office at night, the new information on the local database is synchronised back to the master database and is available for those who are authorised to see and use it.

As part of the process paper forms were converted to electronic forms. This means nurse co-ordinators no longer have to spend time duplicating information, as many fields are ‘pre-populated’ with known data.

They are also able to print out support plans while they are with the client on a small portable printer.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- Access Controller's risk assessment tools:
  - Via Windows wizards
  - Give greater consistency
  - Better information sharing



The company has also used software tools within Windows Wizards to set up client risk and health assessments as part of Access Controller.

For example Access Homehealth has a tool known as the Morse Fall Scale, which calculates the risk of a client suffering from a fall, and another known as the Braden Pressure Scale which calculates the fragility of skin and the risk of ulceration. Shown on this slide is one of the sections from the Mental health assessment tool.

In converting recognised clinical tools such as these from a paper questionnaire to a software system using Windows Wizards, the company has improved client assessments by achieving greater consistency.

By centralising this information it can also give easy access to the data to those who will organise the appropriate care programme for the client resulting from the assessment.



The Access Controller client records system is the only one in New Zealand that can work the way it does without needing a permanent internet connection.

It has brought many benefits to the way Access Homehealth's business operates:

- The new system has meant a rise in productivity with subsequent visits to a client from visiting nurse co-ordinators simply requiring information updating, rather than gathering from scratch.

- It has also meant greater consistency and higher quality work, as borne out by Access Homehealth's last audit.




- It has been an 'environmentally friendly' solution with far less paperwork and a reduction in storage space required.

- And finally it has also meant better access to information through establishment of a centralised database, which has facilitated referrals from one region to another, and better sharing of knowledge between visiting nurses and those who allocate carers and organise their work plans.

Rural Women New Zealand's  
Home healthcare scheme – Access Homehealth Limited

- Rural broadband benefits:
  - “Access Controller” cost \$500,000 to set up
  - This was 3 to 4 times the cost of a web-based system
  - This is just one example of many added costs incurred by rural businesses due to lack of reliable broadband

I wonder if broadband would make it quicker to search for BONES?

However it has come at a real cost: Access Homehealth’s ‘workaround’ database system, Access Controller, has cost the company around \$500,000 to develop, which it estimates to be in the region of three to four times the cost of a web-based solution, had reliable access to broadband been available in the rural environment in which the company works.

While this has been a vital step for Access Homehealth to take, it is unfortunate that the company **could not** take full advantage of the benefits and cost savings of web based technology, which would have given access to an even more efficient solution, and would have meant more of the available funding could have been spent directly on healthcare, rather than on developing computer systems.

Rural Women New Zealand knows this is just one example of thousands where operating a business in a rural area is more costly and where efficiencies are hard-won.

Rural Women New Zealand urges the Government to level the internet playing field both in terms of broadband access and price, for this is an area where huge gains can be made by rural businesses, to the benefit of the whole economy.

Thank you for your time today, and finally, if you know any enterprising rural businesswomen who might wish to enter our prestigious RWNZ Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009, please ask them to go to our website [www.ruralwomen.org](http://www.ruralwomen.org) where they will find all the relevant information and entry forms. Entries close 16 February 2009.