

# **AVAROA CABLE LIMITED PRESS RELEASE:**

**Final for Immediate Release**



## **AVAROA CABLE LTD BEGINS NEW CHAPTER WITH CEO TRANSITION**

*Mike Schwarz takes the helm of the Cook Islands submarine cable operator, joining from Vocus, New Zealand*

*ACL Board thanks founding CEO Dr Ranulf Scarbrough for successfully delivering the Manatua Cable construction and establishing the company as a thriving business amidst sustained global disruption*

**RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS, 4 MAY 2022** - Operator of the Manatua Cable and international telecommunications wholesaler, Avaroa Cable Ltd, has announced that Mike Schwarz has been appointed incoming CEO of the company. The move

follows an extensive international search initiated last year and overseen by ACL's Board.

Schwarz joins from Australian telecoms operator Vocus Group Ltd and brings extensive regional industry experience. He will lead the company from its base in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands.

Schwarz takes over from Dr Ranulf Scarbrough, who has led the company since 2018 as founding CEO.

In its statement welcoming Schwarz, the ACL board hailed the tremendous progress made since hiring Scarbrough in late 2018, when the Manatua cable initiative was still in its infancy. The subsequent three years have seen the 3600km 10Tbps cable successfully manufactured, installed and commissioned across the South Pacific. The programme has included construction of twin state-of-the-art cable landing stations in the Cook Islands of Rarotonga and Aitutaki, as well as building the company up to its current team of locally hired staff and establishing successful commercial operations.

Scarbrough has also provided crucial leadership to the international Manatua Consortium, as Chair of both its overall Management Committee and the Operations and Maintenance Committee.

The statement noted that ACL was the first of the four regional partners in the project to carry live customer internet traffic on the Manatua Cable and how a focus on engineering excellence had ensured the cable had provided flawless service since

going live in September 2020. The statement went on to note that the company was already commercially self-sufficient, through offering ultrafast optical fibre communication services, replacing the need for unreliable and out-dated satellite connectivity in both Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

The statement indicated that Scarbrough would continue to advise the ACL Board following the transition.

**Tatiana Burn, Chair of the ACL Board**, said: *“World class leadership is crucial to the success of ACL. From a standing start, Ranulf has established ACL as a powerful regional telecommunications force both technically and commercially, and despite very challenging global conditions. And I am very pleased that Mike has taken on the challenge to continue our important journey. I would like to thank Ranulf for his huge contribution and I very much look forward to working with Mike on this next chapter and to the success I am confident he will bring.”*

**Cooks Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown** said: *“The Manatua Cable project is a crucial transformational government investment in the future of the Cook Islands. Delivering this project has not been easy, especially with so many global challenges in recent years. I speak for the nation when I recognise the professionalism with which ACL has tackled these challenges. I thank Ranulf Scarbrough for his tireless efforts to get us to where we are today, and I welcome Mike Schwarz and I look forward to him continuing this important work”*

**Dr Ranulf Scarbrough, ACL founding CEO and Chair of the Manatua Cable**

**Consortium** said: *“When I arrived from the UK just over three years ago, ACL was*

*a company without a single employee or even an office and, in telecommunications terms, in a hugely challenging location. Today, ACL is a bustling enterprise, delivering for the people of the Cook Islands. I am incredibly proud of the local team we have built and what has been delivered. With what's been accomplished, it's a good time for me to move on to new challenges and to hand the baton to Mike, who I know is the right person to continue leading ACL's important mission."*

**Mike Schwarz, ACL incoming CEO** said: *"I am thrilled to be taking the helm at ACL. I very much look forward to working with the ACL team, the Board and the many important stakeholders we have, and to continue delivering for the people of the Cook Islands."*

**ENDS**

See following pages for photos and background information.

Note: high resolution JPEG files of the photos below are included as attachments

Photo 1 of 2:



***Left to right, Cook Islands Prime Minister Honourable Mark Brown; ACL outgoing CEO Ranulf Scarbrough; and ACL Board member Richard Williams welcome the Manatua Cable landing in Rutaki Village, Rarotonga, January 2020.***

Photo 2 of 2:



***Incoming ACL CEO Mike Schwarz.***

## **Further information**

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## **About Avaroa Cable Ltd**

ACL is the Pacific's newest international fibre operator providing wholesale connectivity services in the Cook Islands. ACL is a state-owned enterprise (SOE) and manages the Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable project and its commercialisation as an international and domestic wholesale operator. ACL has been established, and the independent board which oversees it is appointed by, the Cook Islands Investment Corporation, which is the government body responsible for SOEs. ACL's board is chaired by local business woman Tatiana Burn. Funding has been provided by the Cook Islands Government, the New Zealand Aid Programme and the Asian Development Bank. ([www.avaroacable.com](http://www.avaroacable.com))

## **About the Cook Islands**

The Cook Islands is an independent democracy comprising 15 islands in the south Pacific of c.17,500 people operating in free association with New Zealand.

## **About the Manatua – One Polynesia Cable**

The Manatua cable is a 3600km long submarine telecommunications cable connecting Samoa, Niue, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Tahiti and Bora. The cable is capable of operating at up to 10 Terabits per second (= 10,000,000 megabits per second) using state-of-the-art fibre optic technology, enough speed to download 300 high definition movies every single second.

## **About the Manatua Cable Consortium**

The ground-breaking Manatua cable consortium was formed following the signing of an International Treaty in November 2018 between the governments of the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and French Polynesia. The purpose of the consortium is to build and operate the Manatua cable. The consortium comprises Avaroa Cable Ltd (for the Cook Islands), Niue Telecom, the Samoa Submarine Cable Company and Office de Poste et Telecommunications (for French Polynesia). It is the first consortium of its type anywhere in the Pacific.