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## The Big Walk

This summer a group of adventurous Kiwis spent two months completing The Big Walk—a 3,000km journey stretching from one end of New Zealand to the other. Why? To spread the message that our young people are our future. Find out more about their incredible adventure inside



WORDS BY SOPHIE HUBER



Dr Allan Freeth  
TelstraClear CEO

## A message from TelstraClear

The way in which a society provides for and nurtures its young people is, in my opinion, an indicator of its health—good or bad. Most New Zealanders would argue that our society is in good health, but a quick review of the facts and figures paints a different picture.

The truth is, New Zealand has a poor record when it comes to young people's well-being. I am daily depressed by media stories of youth suicides, rising child-abuse rates, alcohol and drug abuse—together they are literally killing our young.

I acknowledge the achievements of the countless community organisations all working to address such issues, but I am also left frustrated by their inability to capture the power of synergies in their networks. It is clear to me that the future of youth is a big issue requiring collaboration.

The uncertainty facing our young people has the power to reach across the community and into the workplace. Over the past five years, TelstraClear has become involved with a number of initiatives around children, youth and families in New Zealand. We've developed partnerships that cover a full range of issues in our community. We are very proud of our associations with Lifeline, Save the Children, Crimestoppers NZ and the Salvation Army, as well as our initiatives to help combat cyber-bullying and enhance internet safety for children.

Our partnership with the Foundation for Youth Development (FYD) and The Big Walk represents an exciting catalyst for change in the approach to youth development in New Zealand. It creates real opportunity to motivate and engage New Zealand's youth; to highlight issues and agree on a way to fix them; to turn around our country's negative youth statistics and improve the lives of all New Zealanders.

The meetings that followed—the first between the young people who walked the 3000km Te Araroa trail and business and community leaders, and the second with youth programme providers and policy makers—provided an opportunity to demonstrate commitment, and develop true solutions.

On February 1 we celebrated with participants as they converged on Parliament to mark the end of The Big Walk. On February 2 we hosted an all-day forum with more than 25 chief executives representing some of New Zealand's biggest organisations. We sat with those who took part in The Big Walk, drew from the qualities they demonstrated along the way and listened as they relayed their experiences of programmes offered by agencies such as FYD.

Our aim now is to convene a symposium of senior corporate leaders, charities, agencies and individuals interested in developing specific strategies and collaborative programmes to make a sustainable difference to our youth, in an event labeled Youth 2010.

TelstraClear is proud to be playing an important role in facilitating these initiatives. We are committed to the communities we operate in, and to supporting programmes that will create confident and healthy young people with a critical role to play in New Zealand's future.

I am passionate about finding ways to make New Zealand a better place. I am passionate about the excitement and future our young people represent. I am determined to help find some answers to the crisis that is facing young people in our wonderful country.

I hope you read this supplement and feel motivated to join us on this journey.

Dr Allan Freeth  
CEO, TelstraClear

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## The Foundation for Youth Development



The Foundation for Youth Development (FYD) is an organisation that manages development programmes aimed at inspiring young people to reach their full potential.

Sadly New Zealand has a poor record when it comes to the health of our young people. Our rates of suicide, unplanned pregnancy, drug and alcohol use and death from vehicle injuries are among the highest in the western world. FYD is dedicated to changing these statistics and growing generations of healthy, confident, strong New Zealanders.

Graeme Dingle and Jo-anne Wilkinson are the dynamic duo behind the Foundation for Youth Development. They founded it in

1995 as Project K Trust with the aim of giving young people the skills to maximise their potential.

The core aims of the programmes are to build self-esteem, promote good values and teach valuable life skills. The programmes include Kiwi Can, Stars, Project K and youth offender programmes, and New Zealand's magnificent outdoors provides the backdrop for many of the camps, tramps, community projects and other activities participants get involved in.

There are over 20 regional trusts around New Zealand offering FYD programmes, together they help over 18,000 young people a year contribute positively to society and reach their potential.



**KIWI CAN** is a whole school programme for primary and intermediate students with a focus on positive change for every child. All pupils attend an interactive Kiwi Can lesson once a week, for every week of the school year. The high-energy sessions involve a range of physical, mental and creative challenges and are based on a theme chosen by the school. Themes include relationships, integrity, resilience, respect and environment. The aim of Kiwi Can is to nurture individuals in order to create a better school environment and better communities overall. Kiwi Can is encouraging the next generation to have pride in themselves and their environment, and to respect other people.



**STARS** supports Year 9 students and aims to make their first year of high school a positive experience. The programme is based around a peer mentoring relationship with an older student and helps strengthen the sense of community within the school. There are five components to the programme: adventure camp, community adventure, community project, careers expo and peer mentors. Together these elements provide a supportive and fun transition into high school and equip students with skills to achieve to the best of their abilities.



**PROJECT K** is a 14-month programme designed to inspire 14-15 year olds to reach their full potential. Students who will benefit from Project K are chosen with the help of a self-efficacy questionnaire completed by the whole of their year group. After consultation with the school, students are invited to participate at no cost. Project K is delivered through local trusts to ensure the initiative remains community driven. There are three stages to Project K: wilderness adventure, community challenge and mentoring. The students build self-confidence through the activities and are supported in setting and achieving their personal goals.



# What is The Big Walk?

Two islands. 3,000 kilometres.  
100 teenagers. 500 packets of noodles

The Big Walk began simultaneously at the extremes of the North and South Islands on November 30, 2009. Graeme Dingle set out from Bluff with fellow Foundation for Youth Development (FYD) co-founder Jo-anne Wilkinson. Adventurer Jamie Fitzgerald began at Cape Reinga. Both groups headed to Wellington and were met on the steps of Parliament on February 1, 2010 by the Minister of Youth Affairs, Paula Bennett. The walk was broken into 15 legs in the North Island and 12 in the South Island, each up to 100km long. And true to Graeme Dingle's belief that the outdoors provides the perfect canvas for opening and changing a person's mind and attitude, they travelled over mountains, across rivers, farmland and forests. Joining Graeme and Jamie during the journey were groups of up

to six teenagers who had participated in FYD programmes. Concepts such as goal setting, leadership, and meeting challenges were worked on through a variety of activities designed to further develop life skills and uncover what they think is required to engage other youths within their community. The objective of The Big Walk was to raise awareness of New Zealand's sobering youth statistics and the issues faced by our young people, and learning how to motivate our youth to fulfil their potential. The Big Walk aimed to encourage a unified effort from communities—health care, social services, education, and families—to improve the well-being and development of our youth. The walk ended in Wellington, where every participant of the journey walked the length of Lambton Quay in a parade to Parliament. On February 2, a one-day workshop—Youth 2010: The Big Download—designed and organised by TelstraClear, provided a point of connection for those involved and a chance to share their personal stories, experiences and insights. Attending the workshop were some of the country's business, political and social service leaders who looked to identify the key factors for success in shaping future youth development activities. From that, FYD put together a paper detailing outcomes and pathways to present to policymakers.

## NORTH ISLAND

LEG	DATES	START	END
N1	30 Nov-2 Dec	Cape Reinga	Ahipara
N2	3 Dec-6 Dec	Ahipara	Kerikeri
N3	7 Dec-10 Dec	Kerikeri	Matapouri
N4	10 Dec-13 Dec	Matapouri	Waipu
N5	14 Dec-16 Dec	Waipu	Warkworth
N6	17 Dec-21 Dec	Warkworth	Takapuna
N7	22 Dec-23 Dec	Auckland	Clevedon
N8	27 Dec-30 Dec	Clevedon	Te Pahu
N9	2 Jan-7 Jan	Te Pahu	Barryville (via Te Kuiti)
N10	7 Jan-10 Jan	Barryville	Tongiriro
N11	11 Jan-15 Jan	Tongiriro	Ohakune
N12	16 Jan-19 Jan	Ohakune	Wanganui
N13	20 Jan-23 Jan	Wanganui	Levin
N14	24 Jan-27 Jan	Levin	Paraparaumu
N15	28 Jan-1 Feb	Paraparaumu	Wellington

## The long walk home

Check out the route taken by Big Walk participants



## SOUTH ISLAND

LEG	DATES	START	END
S1	30 Nov-6 Dec	Bluff	Ohai
S2	7 Dec-10 Dec	Ohai	Mararoa River
S3	11 Dec-15 Dec	Mararoa River	Queenstown
S4	16 Dec-18 Dec	Queenstown	Arrowtown
S5	19 Dec-25 Dec	Arrowtown	Twizel
S6	26 Dec-30 Dec	Twizel	Rangitata Gorge
S7	1 Jan-3 Jan	Rangitata Gorge	Mingha River
S8	4 Jan-5 Jan	Mingha River	Otira River
S9	6 Jan-10 Jan	Otira River	Boyle River
S10	12 Jan-16 Jan	Boyle River	Top House
S11	19 Jan-24 Jan	Top House	Mt Richmond Rd
S12	25 Jan-31 Jan	Mt Richmond Rd	Ship Cove

# The team that went the distance

The Big Walk would not have been possible without Jamie Fitzgerald and Foundation for Youth Development (FYD). This initiative provided some awesome experiences and very real challenges for the students who took part. The participants are all involved in or have graduated from FYD programmes



Jamie Fitzgerald  
Campaign manager

Jamie Fitzgerald, a highly regarded keynote speaker created the blueprint for The Big Walk. "I enjoy the opportunity to inspire people with my own thoughts on reaching goals, but providing them the opportunity to demonstrate success is far more compelling."

He approached Graeme Dingle and the Foundation for Youth Development (FYD) to involve them, and The Big Walk was born. "It's about connecting young people to our communities. We've worked hard to provide new, learning-based experiences that students wouldn't get otherwise."

Jamie says the most exciting part was in Wellington, where every participant could share their journey with New Zealand's decision makers. "It was a huge opportunity for the youth sector."

There are three objectives for The Big Walk. First to create awareness of youth statistics; second to raise money so FYD can provide more transformational experiences; and third to involve, align and build commitment from the government and corporates towards a possible future strategy for engaging youth in their communities.



Graeme Dingle  
Co-founder & executive trustee

Graeme Dingle is a bit of a living legend when it comes to adventuring. He's an outdoors extraordinaire who has achieved hundreds of 'firsts' in mountaineering, rock climbing and adventuring the world over.

He is co-founder and executive trustee of the Foundation for Youth Development (FYD), which was initially set up as Project K and has developed over the years into multiple programmes. "Jo-anne and I came back from the Arctic in 1993 and were rather depressed to see such a gorgeous country with such horrendous youth statistics. We set up Project K with a view to helping New Zealand youth feel better about their future."

Graeme hopes The Big Walk is planting a seed that will see real results in the next few years. "I think this will be a multi-year process and I'd like to see even more people and communities getting involved."

Among numerous awards, Graeme has an MBE for services to outdoor pursuits. He has founded four successful charities including the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre, and has written 11 books.



Jo-anne Wilkinson  
Co-founder & executive director

Jo-anne Wilkinson is co-founder and executive director of the Foundation for Youth Development and was very involved in organising The Big Walk. She walked many of the South Island legs with Graeme and says it was a wonderful opportunity to meet the kids who took part. "They've all got huge contributions to make and they all bring something different."

Jo-anne hopes The Big Walk will raise awareness among New Zealanders about the issues facing our youth. "We've still got terrible youth statistics that we should be ashamed about in a country as small and caring as we are."

She is a veteran of the great outdoors and has achieved some impressive adventuring feats, which include a 1,200km sea kayak and mountain traverse off the New Zealand coast, canoeing down the Yukon River, and ascending to 5,700m in the Western Himalayas, to name just a few.



Mason Crofskey, 16  
Kelston Boys High School

Mason was part of a group of five Waitakere Project K graduates to undertake the challenging second leg of the South Island trip, walking and biking from Ohai to Glenorchy with the snowy Southern Alps as their backdrop.

In spite of the wintry conditions, one leg wasn't enough for the Year 12 Kelston Boys High School student; he also joined the South Island walkers for the final leg from Blenheim to Wellington. His highlights were white-water kayaking on Lake Mavora and doing a tyrolean traverse, using ropes and harnesses, across the Mararoa River.

Mason is a member of the FYD Youth Advisory Group: FYD Directionz, 12 young people who meet monthly to give their voice to developing FYD activities.

"The Big Walk was a good experience and a way to develop skills. Not everyone gets to do what I've done."



Michael Lindsay, 17  
Rangitoto College

Three years ago Michael was picked to join FYD's Project K programme, getting his own mentor and spending 17 days on a wilderness adventure. He says being offered the opportunity to do The Big Walk was "perfect."

The Year 13 Rangitoto College student was part of the group who walked and biked the first North Island leg from Herekino to Kerikeri. "The first 15km hike through the Herekino Gorge was really fun and it wasn't too hard actually."

He's enthusiastic about FYD and says he's learnt to have confidence in himself. "I've learnt that you can do things even though you've been chucked into the deep end." His highlights were getting to ride the quad bikes and milk a cow when they camped on a farm. "I reckon if they called me now and asked me to do another leg I'd go straight away."



Sam Palmer, 16  
New Zealand Academy of Sport

Sam is a keen sportswoman and took part in the second leg of the North Island trip, from Herekino to Kerikeri. Then she put her hand up to join the South Island's tenth leg from Boyle River to Tophouse. "It's great getting to meet new people around New Zealand and I'm seeing the South Island for the first time."

Sam is a graduate of Project K and is now studying for a certificate of sport at the New Zealand Academy in Northcote. She says The Big Walk taught her a lot about how to pace herself as well as practical skills such as map reading. "You learn patience as well, because there are people with different levels of fitness. It's definitely an opportunity I wouldn't pass up."



Raksha Prasad, 17  
One Tree Hill College

Raksha joined The Big Walk in the North Island, walking and biking from Waipu to Warkworth with horse riding, surfing and kayaking thrown in along the way.

The Year 13 One Tree Hill College student is a Project K graduate and says the programme taught her to have determination and belief in herself.

She's thrilled to have made life-long friends doing The Big Walk and says the experience has left her feeling physically strong and pleased to be part of raising awareness for New Zealand youth. "I'd like to say to parents—don't put down your teenager's dreams, because they can achieve them."