

SMART ECONOMY GRANT

Supporting innovative ICT commercial ventures

SMART Economy grant brings the 'esports' world to the Cook Islands

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) is pleased to announce it has awarded a \$50,000 grant to Rarotonga-based Timothy Teulilo's company Project Five under the Government's SMART Economy Initiative (SMART). Project Five will use this SMART grant to open the Cook Islands' first 'esports centre' in Rarotonga.

Project Five's Timothy Teulilo says video gaming has become better understood, and more accepted as a positive pastime in recent years. "Video gaming has forever been a cult culture filled with stigmas of basements lit up by TVs, greasy controllers, and a perceived waste of time. Today, this view is shifting. With the general acceptance of screens and technology, video games have become an accepted form of education, hand-eye coordination and motor skill improvement, relaxation, and now a professional career."

Project Five will establish a local esports centre that will be used to promote es-

ports and facilitate participation in competitions. The SMART grant funding will assist

Project Five to build a high-quality esports centre kitted out with the latest equipment. Ultimately the new local esports centre is aiming to develop local esports professionals who can represent the Cook Islands in regional and international tournaments. Many international esports competitions offer substantial

Esports is the term used to describe sport competition using video games, which includes organized, multiplayer video game competitions, individually or in teams.

prize money, making playing professionally a viable option for talented players.

The new local esports centre will enable home-based competitive play-

ers to come together as a team and train more professionally, using a purpose-built venue and the improved access to high-speed internet enabled by the Manatua cable. Being able to come together and play as a group will also promote the social aspect of local gaming culture and forming of local teams and competitions.

Timothy says he intends to offer access to the new esports centre through a range of options including membership fee for regular players and walk-in options. The centre will also be available for family functions such as birthday parties as well as hosting regular esports competitions and events. "I'm looking forward to creating a space where the avid gamers can get together with like-minded people and potentially play teams from abroad, says Timothy. "I'm excited about developing the local gaming scene and taking our culture to the world through esports."

