Do you agree with the way this paper defines convergence? Why/why not?

Yes.

It accurately defines the changes occurring in media/data and communication technologies and business models.

Do New Zealand's current regulations and policies need to change to account for convergence? Why/why not?

Yes.

Though I support an open internet, I also believe ideas are powerful things. Sadly, much of the power of ideas in modern society functions in a devolutionary way. This first became clear to me when the number of TV channels in NZ increased and one of the results was a vast increase in low-quality programming, for example, infomercials and repeats of old shows. As the old Pink Floyd songs says: "I've got 13 channels of shit on my TV to choose from" and since that time, even NZ has access to a considerably higher number.

I believe we need a NZ "channel" or media source that functions for reasons other than selling advertising, promoting products, and delivering content that serves only to shock and titillate. Call it a kind of museum, if you will. A safe place for things that have value, but don't make money. To the credit of those who pushed for it and saw its value, the Maori language has seen a revival and will not now end up extinct. Ask yourself what is under threat from the deluge of media content. We want to save the kiwi. What is there about NZ culture, about human culture, that needs to be protected and preserved? Sadly, I'd have to say one of the things we need to preserve is a strong investigative tradition in our news reporting.

The following idea may be controversial, but the fact is there truly is an abundance of media online: interesting distractions, entertainment designed to be addictive and/or to drain the viewer/participant of as much of their money as possible, prurient content and its associated psychological (and eventually social) effects. There is little that actually promotes culture, ideas, education, philosophy, etc. Little that builds up society and helps people become stronger, healthier, wiser, more caring, more educated, more curious about the world we live in because there's little money to be made from these things. We don't allow kids to smoke or heroin to be illegal or people to throw trash on the streets or to pollute the land, rivers or streams, yet we're blind to the pollution in our media and the effect it has on people. I have seen infomercials in NZ where the public are out-rightly lied to. In the US now, it's somehow OK for news shows to lie because their content is protected. Will we turn a blind eye to those who use media to make money or promote their interests by lying to the public?

But what can be done against the flood of media content as it grows? I suggest creating a source of content that holds to the highest standards. As 'Consumer' magazine tested products and allowed the public to get some understanding of the best quality choices available to them, something similar could be done with ideas, with things in our culture worth preserving, etc.

I think we need a means of taxing offshore purchases and perhaps a means of procuring offshore funds for NZ. A GOVERNMENT-RUN media channel, not privately run, for people overseas could serve to promote NZ as a tourist destination and an educational destination.*

*BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T SCREW UP THE WAY AUSTRALIA HAS WITH ITS LOSS OF EDUCATIONAL INTEGRITY AS UNIVERSITIES SELL OUT, ITS MASSIVE INCREASE IN UNDERPAID WORKERS AS FOREIGN STUDENTS ARE USED AND ABUSED (GENERALLY BY BUSINESS OWNERS FROM THEIR OWN NATIONS), ITS RISE IN DODGY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THAT MAKE THEIR MONEY OFF THOSE WHO REALLY JUST WANT AN EXCUSE TO GET A WORK VISA, AND THE PRESSURE ON HOUSING THAT BEGAN WHEN LANDLORDS STARTED CRAMMING 3 OR 4 INTO A ROOM AND DOUBLING THEIR RENTAL INCOME! It's seeing things like this happen that makes it clear to me that those who feel the market should operate without ANY oversight or checks and balances are a destructive force in society. I dearly hope that a market-driven mentality will not inform decisions on convergence. Woe betide us if it does. I also hope that pressures from foreign interests, whether corporate or national, will not inform NZ decisions on convergence. The love of money is a root of many evils.

Do you agree with the proposed convergence work programme?

In isolation, yes.
However, there are very serious related questions I don't see addressed by this programme or those who would prioritise it.
Firstly, there is the question of more serious issues in NZ society that need attention: Health, education, work opportunities, property prices, increasing social division.
Secondly, there are many serious questions about privacy and surveillance that have been swept under the rug by this government and others with whom NZ has to do. Without addressing these issues openly and honestly and with the interests of the NZ people and their informed decisions taken into account, the proposed convergence work programme could end up making the rug bigger: Less accountability, more surveillance, less privacy. It is crucial, for the integrity and ethical welfare of NZ society, that these things are addressed.
Thirdly, there is growing evidence that online resources and screen/device use in educational settings is actually counterproductive. As an educator, I'm disappointed in those who promote the use of these technologies for education when there's little to no support for their efficacy in education. Indeed, there is increasing evidence that their use contributes to shortened attention spans and decreased recall.

Should the Government be doing anything else to address convergence?

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What barriers are you aware of that prevent you from benefiting from, or responding to, convergence?

The overall poor quality of material and content of communication online dissuades me from much online interaction, as does what I see as the waste of my precious time in online pursuits. Frankly, I already spend too much time each day looking at a screen.

Name

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