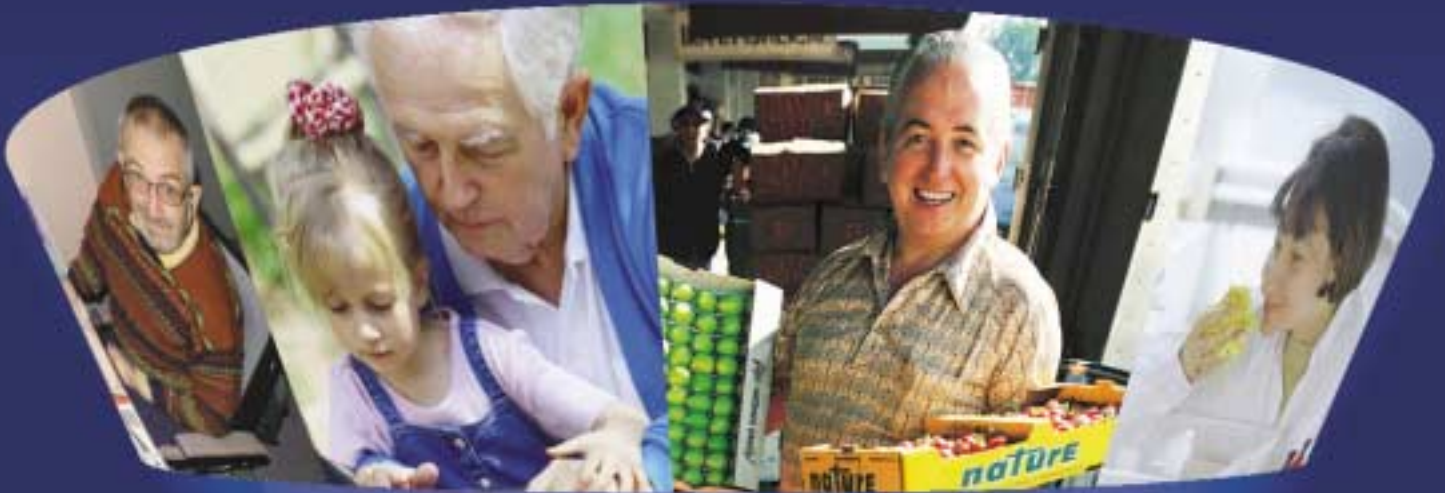




Australian Government

National Office for the Information Economy

BROADBAND



What Broadband can contribute to
Regional Australia

Introduction

Broadband – or high speed Internet – is a big step forward in communications for all Australians, in particular for the people and businesses of regional and rural Australia.

It delivers high speed, always connected, Internet access – real-time access to services.

Broadband will allow improved standards in the delivery of health care and education and improved communications.

MAKE BROADBAND WORK FOR YOU

Broadband offers realistic new opportunities for regional and rural Australians. For example, broadband can provide business opportunities and expanding potential markets.

Teleworking, or working from home via the Internet, is a more viable proposition with broadband.

Broadband's high speed means fast, efficient communications, instead of communications that can be slow with a dial-up connection.

Broadband's speed means online regional and rural businesses, competing against the world on the Internet, can now provide the same quality of online service as other businesses.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Broadband is improving communications between regional Australians, between regional and metropolitan Australians, and between regional Australians and international markets.

It can help people keep in touch more regularly, using email as an inexpensive means of exchanging not only greetings and photographs but perhaps short videos and video conferencing as well.

Broadband improves access to education and can improve the delivery of health services for regional Australians.

Broadband provides entertainment, playing games against real opponents in Seoul, listening to live radio from Tallahassee, a live concert from London or a virtual tour of Marrakech. Broadband brings within reach information about almost any topic you can imagine.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BROADBAND

Broadband lets you enjoy all the advantages of living in regional Australia – space, community, less traffic – and still be connected to the services, the facilities and the activity of the city.

Broadband is an important step forward for regional development. Read on to find out how you can benefit from, and enjoy the experience of, broadband in your daily life – no matter what line of work you are in.

BROADBAND AVAILABILITY

Broadband is an emerging service, with take up growing rapidly. As people take up broadband, supply is sometimes uneven as services are progressively rolled out. As a result, broadband services are sometimes available through different delivery mechanisms in different parts of Australia. Some people in regional, rural and remote areas do not have access to broadband services at prices comparable to those enjoyed by metropolitan users.

As part of the Australian Government's response to the Regional Telecommunications Inquiry, the Government announced that it would improve access to affordable broadband services, where they are not likely to be provided commercially in the near future.

If you would like more information about Australian Government broadband initiatives see the A National Broadband Strategy Explained booklet or contact the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE). Website and contact details are provided at the end of this document.

**With broadband
you'll have the
world at your fingertips.**



Small Business

We have heard of the promise e-commerce holds for businesses in regional Australia – that e-commerce is a gateway to compete in national and international markets.

Broadband connectivity means that this promise can be delivered. Faster access means more power and more options. An 'always on' connection means no waiting to dial up and therefore more responsive systems; it means you can provide a better service to your clients.

EFFICIENCY

The Internet has allowed many businesses to tap into wider markets. Broadband takes this a step further – saving businesses time and money.

- High speed access helps you to work quickly and efficiently – allowing you to find information in a hurry.
- 'Always on' means there is no waiting and no need to postpone tasks until you are next online.
- 'Always on' means that online access is available instantly – when you need it.
- Broadband doesn't tie up your phone line so you can be on the Internet and on the phone at the same time. You eliminate the need for a second phone line dedicated to the Internet.
- Broadband allows several computers to be networked so they can be connected to the Internet simultaneously through a single connection.

IMPROVED BUSINESS PRACTICES

Broadband is an opportunity to streamline and improve your business practices.

- 'Always on' means suppliers and customers can send through instant messages. Confident that you are going to receive an email immediately, you will spend less time on the phone or dealing with faxes.
- You'll have quick and easy access from any computer in your business to resources on the Internet. Important information, such as freight or shipping schedules, customs requirements or handling charges is always at your disposal.
- Broadband means searching and researching tender databases is easy and much less time-consuming. This could mean more opportunity to bid for work.
- 'Always on' means you can integrate your systems with those of major suppliers and customers – for example, major supermarkets have computer-based ordering systems that suppliers can plug straight into.

- Multiple systems can be integrated so that as customer orders are processed and filled, inventory records are automatically updated, even if your business has multiple outlets in widely dispersed locations.

The speed of broadband and its instant availability can increase your staff's productivity and efficiency, leading to improved profitability for your business.

For more information on moving your business to broadband, see the accompanying booklets *Broadband for Small Business* and *Why Broadband?*

BROADBAND CONNECTION

Broadband for the future.

Jane runs a health-food bakery business in rural Victoria. Some marketing in Melbourne has led to sustained growth – turnover is now approaching \$1.5 million and 24 staff are on the books.

The opportunity for further growth is evident to Jane, but it means a more sophisticated approach. She needs to develop merchandising materials, and work with larger retailers to promote her products.

The problem is, all the leading merchandising agencies are in the city, and Jane would need to visit them at least every week once the relationship starts, to view and approve the merchandising materials.

She is too far away for cost effective courier runs – overnight is often too slow and dial-up modems are just impractical for large graphic files.

The answer is broadband.

With a broadband link, Jane is able to send and receive large graphic files for merchandising material between her office and her agencies and retailers in real time.

As an added bonus, she can now plug into the ordering systems of some large supermarket chains. Because she is always online, Jane is among the first to know each time a request for a product is made – and is the first to bid for supply.

Jane's competitors are still using dial-up. By the time they dial in each evening and download their emails, she has secured the order and started preparing the shipment.

Primary Industry

To successfully manage a property, you need to be an expert not just in farming practices, but also in related disciplines such as resource management, business administration and risk assessment.

The Internet has become a primary source of much-needed information for many property owners.

Online, you can find:

- latest research and farming practices, methods to control pests and diseases and resource management to aid in sustainable agriculture
- information about government grants and assistance, quarantine regulations and packaging and labelling
- advice on business planning and taxation, insurance, banking products and budgeting.

But slow dial-up modems have meant much of the information available has been impractical to access.

With broadband, as well as reading a page of text about pest control, you may view a short video and watch someone apply the technique.

In addition, with the convenience of high speed access you will be able to easily take a moment to follow related links and look into the issue in more depth.

With the Internet, you can access information, but with broadband, it becomes meaningful. Rich media presentations help you move faster and to learn more while you're researching.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Farming in Australia is inherently risky due to factors such as our highly variable climate, substantial distances to markets and fluctuating market prices.

Primary producers need advance warning of extreme weather conditions, such as rain, wind or frost, to plan daily activities, and seasonal outlooks to plan management strategies.

The Internet provides access to a wealth of information that can help with the management of climatic risks.

With broadband you can go one step further. You can quickly view satellite images and radar maps, download large reports and presentations about climate change and forecasting, and view real-time data, because broadband is 'always on'.

Decision support systems, accessible over the Internet, can help manage these risks. 'Always on' and fast, broadband can put the very latest data at your finger tips. These systems can help you with:

- crop choice and planting times
- weed and pest management
- scheduling irrigation and fallows
- estimating crop yields from past rainfall records
- selecting appropriate management strategies using local soil and weather data.

Market uncertainty is another risk faced daily by Australian farmers. The Internet gives you access to current market intelligence and prices and trends, helping you to make sound commercial decisions about the harvesting, transport and sale of produce.

Having a broadband link gives you fast, efficient access to this information as you need it. As broadband is 'always on', the markets can be monitored whenever you need to, and in real time.

INDUSTRY FORUMS

Like any industry sector, the agricultural industry faces common issues on a local and industry-wide basis. The Internet is the ideal forum for debating these issues as it allows you to interact with your industry colleagues, no matter where they are located.

Broadband adds new potential to these forums. Speed opens the door to real-time voice or audio discussion groups; the convenience of 'always on' could mean more participants.

Fast, convenient, 'always on' - for the farming sector broadband will change the way you use the Internet, and make it more a part of your everyday life.



Tourism



Tourism is one of Australia's major revenue earners. More than 5 million people visited Australia in 2000/01 and millions of Australians decided to see a little more of their own country. In addition, about 500,000 people, mainly young Australians, are employed in the tourism industry.

The tourism industry recognises the power of the Internet as a marketing tool. Most governments now have a portal, such as Visit Victoria, Tourism NSW or Queensland Holidays, where you can list your website alongside other tourist operators in the same region.

The Australian Tourism Commission has an initiative called the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse – a huge database that stores information on every tourism operator in the country. This will provide consistent, accurate and extensive information on Australian tourism products and destinations which can be used by operators, wholesalers, retailers and distributors on their websites.

SHOWCASE YOUR ATTRACTION

Whether you operate a tourist attraction, run tours or offer accommodation, a website will help you reach a wider audience and tap into new domestic and overseas markets.

Large numbers of people research travel destinations on the Internet before leaving home. Attractive, informative websites capture the imagination of potential visitors from far and wide, long before they arrive.

Without a website, many tourists won't even know you exist.

Holidays are about experience. As well as a couple of pages of text with photographs, your website can more fully reflect the experience you offer.

Broadband makes it possible to:

- embed a video tour of your facility
- include a 24-hour web-cam showing a current tour you are running or some feature of your attraction
- include tour maps with audio commentary on highlights.

Offering such a website would not be practical without the high speed Internet access offered by broadband.

MARKET RESEARCH

Broadband means faster access to the extensive industry information that is available on the Internet,

such as:

- industry news
- the latest statistics and research
- marketing advice
- image and video libraries.

BROADBAND CONNECTION

Broadband for the future.

Bill and Dianne run a boutique winery and guesthouse in the Barossa valley.

Bill's wine sales were all cellar door with some fax or email orders from past visitors. He was thinking about ways to build the fax or email business.

Dianne wanted to increase occupancy levels at the guesthouse.

They had used the Internet a bit, but it was so slow they had not got beyond sending and receiving text emails.

Then they heard about broadband and discovered they could access it from their property.

Using broadband they were able to quickly search the Internet for casual wine clubs all over the world. Bill saw this as an immediate opportunity. He scanned in his wine label and a few photos of the winery and sent off an offer to every club he could find.

For Dianne, the guesthouse was a labour of love – beautifully presented inside and out. Guests received Dianne's own notes on the best nature and historical walks in the area.

With some help, Dianne loaded it all onto the Internet using broadband, and set up a map of the walks which, when you clicked on certain spots, brought up photographs of the location.

Now Bill and Dianne are doing business directly with people from around Australia and the world.

One wine club in the UK invited Bill to talk to their next meeting via a web conference. With a little assistance from the people at the other end and the broadband connection, Bill could take them up on their offer. He sold thousands of dollars worth of wine.

Dianne is thinking about her map idea. If people could see the actual view at the time they click on the map...? She knows it is now possible, but she needs a camera or two and is going to investigate the options.

Education

Broadband has the potential to greatly improve the educational experience of regional Australians.

COLLABORATION

Students can use broadband to collaborate with classmates from their own or other schools via email or even video conferencing.

Children who attend the Alice Springs School of the Air are beginning to work with their classmates in just this manner.

Broadband uses a dedicated link so the Internet can be used for education without tying up the phone.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

The Internet gives students in remote areas access to a rich collection of resources.

The speed of broadband allows for faster access to information that is not limited to the written word but includes photographs, diagrams, videos and animations.

The Internet includes search engines especially tailored to a younger audience - only including information that is suitable. There are also websites dedicated to helping with homework.

With broadband, students can take full advantage of these resources. The intensive visual and audio information available through broadband helps many children understand quickly and assists in their learning.

TOOL FOR TEACHERS

The Internet is also a valuable tool for teachers, who can post assignments, information and results online for easy access by students.

Having broadband makes this job much faster, allowing more time for other tasks, such as lesson preparation.

In addition, broadband allows access to high quality resources to create interesting and stimulating lessons.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers (in fact, any professional) can use the Internet to further their professional development.

This is especially valuable for those in remote areas who may not have access to in-service training courses.

With broadband access, it is easier for teachers to watch a training video online or participate in a group training or peer support session with others in remote locations.

ADULT EDUCATION

Many Australian universities, TAFE colleges and other adult education facilities are putting their curriculum online. For example, the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE is offering Certificate IV in Agriculture online and students can enrol from anywhere in Australia.

Broadband also increases the opportunities for Australians to access overseas education opportunities by distance learning.

Downloading a one-hour lecture via a modem – not to mention accessing readings and other materials, and uploading bulky assignments – is tedious.

Broadband means more time studying and less time waiting around.

For regional and rural Australians, broadband may provide an opportunity to retrain or to achieve academic distinction in a field of interest.



BROADBAND CONNECTION

Broadband for the future

Jack is in year five and living on a remote property in South Australia. Jack's parents are concerned that if he stays on the property he will fall behind in his studies, but they don't want to send him to boarding school. The South Australian School of the Air with assistance from the Australian Government has provided a solution with its innovative application of broadband technology.

The school used a grant from the Australian Government to pilot a virtual classroom to service 20 of the most isolated families in the state. Jack uses his laptop computer connected via satellite to interact and work collaboratively on projects with other students through features including a virtual whiteboard and virtual 'breakout rooms' for smaller group work.

This project has provided students like Jack with a quality of service not previously possible using two-way radio and allows the teachers to engage the students as a group. Jack's parents have also become Internet literate while helping him with his schoolwork and have been able to interact with others in their geographically dispersed community through the Internet.



Health

The use of broadband in medicine is bringing major change and significant benefits to regional, rural and remote communities.

Broadband is being used to bring specialist health services closer to where people live and to provide a wider range of services.

These are just some of the more common benefits of 'e-health'.

SPECIALIST CARE

Regional and rural Australians requiring a specialist often must plan a trip to the city or a major regional centre, with perhaps overnight accommodation included. This can be costly, time-consuming and stressful.

Today, an increasing number of communities can access specialist care locally via a remote consultation using video conferencing. This is a consultation by video with a health professional based in another part of the state or country.

The consultation takes place at a local health centre, hospital or doctor's surgery in a specially-equipped private interview room. The local doctor, nurse or health professional is also present during the consultation.

Everyone involved can see and hear each other using broadband and the health professionals can make a diagnosis and discuss treatment and ongoing care.

The benefits of remote consultations include:

- regular follow-up consultations – video conferencing gives easy access to doctors or specialists that are not able to visit rural and remote communities as often as they may need to, resulting in better health outcomes
- outpatient support – patients living in rural and remote areas can often be discharged from hospital and return home to their families sooner if support is easily accessible via remote consultation
- better care for those with special needs – a person in a small community could gain access to a health service provider who understands his/her condition, language and cultural beliefs.

The speed of dial-up connections has meant many of these services have been impractical up till now. Broadband makes it possible.

Health

MEDICAL INFORMATION TRANSFER

Broadband can be used to send images, such as x-rays or CT scans, and test results electronically to another health-care provider. The ability to send these images quickly and accurately can reduce the time needed to obtain a specialist opinion and allow treatment to begin sooner.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Video conferencing using broadband allows medical staff scattered over a wide area to participate in professional development seminars, to talk to their peers about particular cases, or participate in real time classes online. This is very valuable to regional medical professions, helping them continually update their skills and making them feel less professionally isolated.

REMOTE MONITORING

Remote monitoring can help the elderly or chronically ill remain in their own homes, or can provide post-discharge care.

A patient's vital signs are recorded on a small wireless device and then sent electronically to appropriate clinicians who are connected to the Internet via 'always on' broadband connections. This allows them to respond quickly to a change in the patient's condition.

Broadband technology can also be used to give a remote consulting medical expert multiple camera views of the patient, doctors and nurses in an emergency room – along with access to screens monitoring the patient's vital signs and displaying test results. This allows the expert to direct activities of the staff in the emergency room. This kind of system is currently being trialed and is expected to be made more widely available in the future.

BROADBAND CONNECTION

Broadband for the future

Renal disease affects thousands of Australians, many of whom require regular access to dialysis machines and other specialist equipment.

The problem in regional areas is accessing this equipment without travelling to the nearest capital city.

In the future the Department of Health will have introduced a new tool called an Electronic Health Record (EHR). An EHR will exist for each Australian, and record health details and individual care programs for the next six months, with appropriate privacy policies in place.

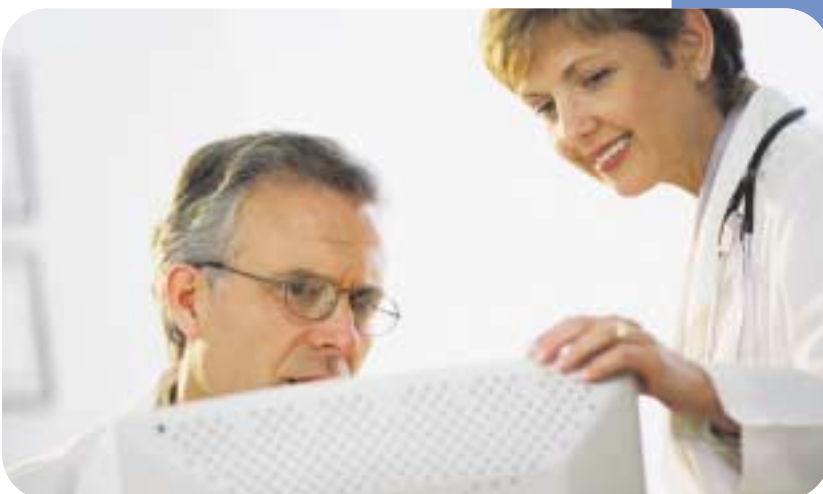
In this future, using broadband connections, the EHR is updated every time anyone goes to a doctor – observations and test results are recorded.

When a patient visits a doctor, or any health professional, all the latest test results and critical data is pushed at high speed to that doctor's computer screen – so even a doctor that has never seen this patient before has a clear understanding of their situation and care plan.

Best of all, treatment is now coordinated with other patients with similar conditions. Specialised teams can now visit regional areas and be certain they reach everyone who needs their attention.

Back to the present. An EHR system is now being trialled in Katherine, in the Northern Territory, targeting diabetes.

In late 2003 it is expected that a renal disease trial will commence in central Australia, bringing coordinated care to hundreds of patients.



Creative Arts

Many parts of regional Australia are beautiful places and many artists, craftspeople, musicians and others create inspired artwork in these regions.

A number of artists move to take advantage of the relaxing lifestyle and inspiring beauty of regional Australia. These regional artists can still participate in the larger metropolitan and international art markets by making use of the Internet and broadband.

WEB-BASED GALLERIES

A website can be a place for people with a creative flair to exhibit their work to the world. Not only does it showcase their talent, but it also allows their work to be seen and appreciated by a much wider audience.

For example, in May 2003 www.aboriginalart.org was launched serving as a portal linking more than 30 independent Indigenous art centres promoting Indigenous art and craft of the Top End and Kimberley regions of Australia. The new site offers search facilities for different art media, information about the art and craft centres and links to affiliated organisations. The project was made possible by almost \$600,000 in funding from the Australian Government's Networking the Nation program and is administered by the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists.

Maintaining a website full of images, videos or music files would be very tedious without broadband, as these files are usually large and take a substantial amount of time to upload on a dial-up connection.

Broadband makes this job quick and easy and leaves more time for artists to concentrate on the creative aspect of their work.

COMMUNITY NETWORKING

People involved in the creative arts can also use the Internet to:

- purchase supplies that may not be available locally
- find out about events being held at which they could display or demonstrate their work
- network through email and chat rooms and find out the latest industry gossip, where the best quality or cheapest materials are available or which shows are worthwhile attending.

The speed of broadband makes all of these tasks quick and easy, and its 'always on' nature provides access to these services without delay.

Government

Most government offices provide facilities that allow you to transact with them electronically.

These facilities offer you the convenience of being able to access information or complete transactions at a time that suits you, any time of the day.

They save you time and money by eliminating the need to visit the relevant office and possibly queue for service when you arrive.

Broadband adds to your convenience by providing high speed, efficient access to these facilities, saving you still more time and eliminating further delays.

The recent NOIE e-benefits study highlighted consumers of online services valued these services highly. Survey respondents estimated they saved, on average, around \$14 per transaction through accessing services online.

As more Australians get access to broadband, government services will also become more broadband-focused with an increased use of sound, video and other interactive elements.

The usage of government online services is expanding in response to customer demand. The services on offer into the future will include more sophisticated transactions. Online services include those needed for particular life events (such as getting married, or having a baby) as well as day to day transactions.

If you are thinking of buying a car, you can access the Register of Encumbered Vehicles to find out if the vehicle is carrying any debt.

If you are starting a business, you will find lots of helpful information about setting up your business, obtaining licenses, permits and franchises.

You can check to see if your proposed business name is already registered and download a form to apply for registration.

The Australian Tax Office lets you apply for an ABN, register for GST or lodge your BAS statement or tax return electronically.

Many government departments advertise their tenders online and some require tender documents to be lodged electronically.

In the Home

There are many benefits to having a broadband connection at home – for both work and play.

People living in regional and rural areas can particularly benefit by accessing services not available nearby.

CONVENIENCE

Broadband's high speed gives you fast access to banking, trading on the stockmarket, online bill payment, shopping and other services.

Research shows that once you have broadband, your use of the Internet changes dramatically.

Because it is 'always on', fast and convenient, you can use it to get your TV guide, footy results, tonight's recipe or the latest news.

With broadband, you don't have to wait for pages to download; you can get information within a few seconds of requesting it.

ENTERTAINMENT

Broadband's speed means it is possible to access entertainment opportunities not previously available in rural and regional Australia. You can:

- watch concerts live online
- watch live interviews with celebrities – or take part in a web chat
- download music from you favourite band's website – or watch their video clips
- online gaming means you can compete against players from all over the world
- listen to the radio or watch movies.

All of these things are enabled by the high speed of broadband.

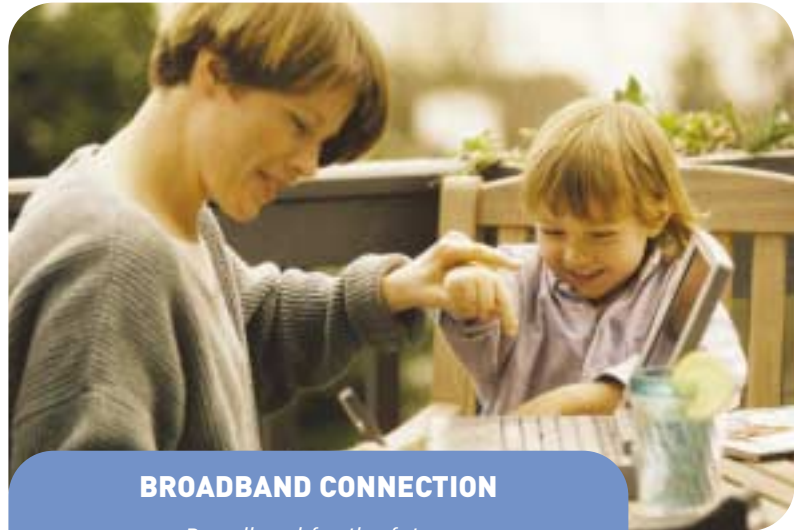
STAYING IN TOUCH

Broadband makes it easier to stay in touch with family members and close friends.

Broadband means you can exchange photographs and videos, as well as the written word. With broadband's speed, you'll be able to email those photos of the new baby or that clip of Sarah's athletics win or Timmy's birthday party to all your friends and family.

Proud grandparents, too, will be able to share their grandchildren's achievements with friends near and far.

You may even be able to talk via a video link.



BROADBAND CONNECTION

Broadband for the future

Leanne is a mother of two and a travel agent, currently discovering the many benefits of working from home.

Thanks to a broadband Internet connection and a laptop computer, Leanne can now book flights, plan itineraries and liaise with the office and her clients from the comfort of her own home.

The laptop is in my kitchen so sometimes I'm getting breakfast for the children when I start work. My three-year-old imitates me. She sets up her papers around me and asks not to be disturbed," Leanne says.

Leanne's daughter was 18 months old when she started working from home. Her son is now a year old. Leanne recalls the days before she decided to work from home, making calls to airlines at two in the morning to check tickets or having to drive back into the office because of a client emergency.

A broadband connection is helping Leanne to defeat the conflicts that arise from having to dedicate the time and energy that both a career and a family demand.

And there are other advantages to having a broadband connection in the home. The rapid connection allows Leanne to stay in touch with her sister in England, enabling her to promptly upload her sister's travel photos and send pictures of the children in return.

Leanne finds that the convenience of a broadband connection also allows her to shop from home. Ordering groceries online relieves the stress of having to take her two young children with her to the supermarket. At home, the children enjoy singing along to the Bananas in Pyjamas theme song from the ABC website.

Availability and cost of broadband services

Broadband services are becoming increasingly available in rural and regional Australia. NOIE recommends the following websites for further information on broadband services in your region.

www.broadbandchoice.com.au

This site lists broadband service providers by region and provides details of pricing plans. A facility to search for a service provider meeting your criteria is provided at www.broadbandchoice.com.au/plan.cfm

www.cynosure.com.au.isp

This list gives details of both dial-up and broadband providers, by region.

www.broadbandxchange.org/sas/adsl.asp

This facility identifies whether your local telephone exchange can support DSL services.

More Information

More information about broadband, its uses and its benefits can be found in the other booklets in this series (which are also available on the NOIE website – www.noie.gov.au).

- *Broadband for Small Business* gives readers a detailed summary of the different broadband technologies, as well as information on Internet service providers and commonly used technology.
- *Broadband for the Home* gives readers an overview of the ways in which broadband can be used by residential users.
- *Broadband Resources* lists many other sources of information on matters related to broadband and the Internet.
- *Why Broadband?* provides a step-by-step guide to undertaking a cost/benefit analysis of implementing broadband in a small or medium sized business.

In addition, the Broadband Xchange website (www.broadbandxchange.org) provides valuable information about all aspects of broadband.

To the maximum extent permissible by law, both SPAN and the Australian Government expressly disclaim any liability to any person arising out of anything done or omitted to be done by any person in reliance, whether wholly or in part, upon the whole or any part of the information in this brochure.

About NOIE

NOIE is the Australian Government agency helping Australians create a world-class online economy and society through its work developing, overseeing, and coordinating Australian Government policy on e-commerce, online services, broadband and the Internet.

About SPAN Broadband Xchange

Broadband Xchange is a project established by SPAN, the Service Providers Industry Association. It commenced in 2001 to demonstrate the value of broadband to business and consumer audiences and to stimulate the market to reach its full potential. It is funded by industry sponsors Alcatel, Connect, Ericsson, iPrimus, Microsoft, Neighbourhood Cable, NEXTEP, Pacific Internet, Powercor, Request, Sensis, Singtel Optus, Southern Cross Cable Network and Telstra.

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