



1st November 2007

Needs of rural and regional communities in relation to telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services and, in particular, to report on the following terms of reference:

(a) The availability of telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services in rural and regional communities;

The availability of telecommunications should be available to all and in some instances it is not. Anyone too far from the Telephone Exchange will not be able to receive cheap ADSL connections via their phone line (I think it is 3 – 5 kilometers, any further than that and you're out of range). This does not mean they cannot receive broadband, it just means they cannot receive it via a telephone connection; they would have to go via Satellite, which is outrageously expensive.

I would think that most people do not understand the differences between various offers available e.g. a Broadband internet connection that provides 200 megabytes of data download per month and then being charged an excess for any usage over is I believe an unfair product. Most people do not understand what a megabyte is or how much they would download per month. This sort of connection (which is being sold by many Internet Service Providers) needs more clarification to the general user.

I would also believe that clarification on products provided by internet service providers would benefit all, as it is a growing industry (shown by the statistics below) and we are in the top 10 compared to countries around the world for internet usage at home.

	<i>Total Internet Use</i>				<i>Broadband Subscribers</i>	
	<i>Subscribers</i>	<i>Subscribers</i>	<i>Users</i>	<i>Users per</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per 100</i>
	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>per 100 inhab.</i>	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>100 inhab.</i>	<i>(000s)</i>	<i>inhab.</i>
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2006</i>
United States	62'000.0	21.32	208'000.0	69.10	58'136.6	19.31
United Kingdom	16'575.1	27.70	33'534.0	56.03	12'995.1	21.71
Australia	6'650.0	32.65	15'300.0	75.12	3'900.0	19.15
New Zealand	1'197.6	29.72	3'200.0	78.77	576.1	14.18

Source: International Telecommunications Union 2006

- At the end of the March quarter 2007, there were 6.43 million active Internet subscribers in Australia, comprised of 761,000 business and government subscribers and 5.67 million household subscribers.
- The number of non dial-up subscribers was 4.34 million, compared with dial-up subscribers of 2.09 million recorded at the end of March 2007.
- Non dial-up subscribers increased by 16% between September 2006 and March 2007, while dial-up dropped by 16%. The growth in non dial-up was driven mainly by household subscribers.
- Non dial-up subscribers represented 67% of total Internet subscribers in Australia at the end of March 2007 compared with 60% at the end of September 2006.
- Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) continued to be the dominant access technology used for non dial-up subscribers, with 3.36 million or almost 78% of total non dial-up subscribers being connected using this means.
- Connections with download speeds of 1.5Mbps or greater increased by 43% in March 2007 to 1.56 million, compared to 1.09 million subscribers at the end of September 2006.

Source ABS current Mar 07



(b) The benefits and opportunities for rural and regional communities of having access to telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services;

The benefits and opportunities can be split up into 2 areas, Business and Residential.

Residential users of Broadband Internet allow users to purchase products from a wider selection of consumer goods and thus creating a greater market. Residential users also have the benefit of communicating with other family members via email, websites and instant messaging. E.g. my father lives in Sydney and wishes to see photos of his grandchildren, I can take photos of them and email the photos to him. All in the same day. Residential users also have the ability to research more efficiently. A Student who is at school or Tafe can source more information from searching the internet and in some instances can complete a Tafe program via the internet and never have to enter a class room.

Businesses can benefit in many ways (some of them the same as the residential) and I believe one of the major ones is Branding. A business can Brand themselves and create a larger market to sell their products. Why just have local areas, when you can sell to the world?

An internet Domain name the same as the business name will elevate the business. One it looks more professional with email communications and two gives the consumer the impression that you are much larger than you may be.

Many businesses in Rural areas may not do this Domain name method as they may think it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in realistic terms it does not. Businesses do not always require equipment for Domain names and email, all they need is someone with a little education on how the internet works.

(c) Disincentives and barriers to the provision of telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services to rural and regional communities;

The biggest barrier for the provision of broadband services would be the phone line as stated in section a), and for IT Businesses for providing ADSL.

Currently if you would like to be able to supply Broadband to prospective clients you have to supply the telecommunications supplier with a security deposit, based on their requirements and in some instances that can be in the \$10,000 mark.

One way to relieve the pressure would be to enable such telecommunications providers a bit of relief for smaller IT Businesses, so they can provide affordable broadband to the community.

(d) The consequences for rural and regional communities of not having, or not having adequate, access to telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services, having regard to likely future industry and technological developments; and

(e) Options for encouraging providers of telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services to extend services to rural and regional communities.