

***BROADBAND AVAILABILITY: USING BROADBAND
AND THE INTERNET***

**Thursday 30 October 2008
Tradewinds Hotel
59 Canning Highway
East Fremantle**

Welcome and Introduction:

Tony Hill, President of the Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU) welcomed participants to this meeting and said that this discussion is supported by the Australian Government through the Consumer Representation Grants program of the Department of Communications, Broadband and the Digital Economy.

The focus of the discussion in the morning will be on the availability of broadband: what is available to participants, and whether there are barriers to use such as accessibility and cost. Two speakers will assist in the discussion: Tony Hancox, State Manager, Corporate Affairs, Telstra, and Dan Scott, Marketing Manager, Westnet. The afternoon session will be a discussion on how everyone uses broadband and the Internet.

Tony said this meeting is being held jointly with the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA), and introduced ASCCA President, Nan Bosler.

Nan Bosler, President, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association welcomed the participants, many of whom are ASCCA members, and looked forward both to the presentations and the input from everyone sharing their experiences with accessing and using broadband and the Internet.

Morning Session:

Tony Hancox, State Manager, Corporate Affairs, Telstra

Tony reviewed the support Telstra provides for seniors, including financial support through grants at the local, state and national levels. He then outlined the five ways that broadband can be delivered and the characteristics of each:

- Satellite – it can deliver broadband speeds to the whole geographic area of Australia. The difficulty is that broadband speed is only available for downloads. However, for many areas of Australia that are too difficult to reach using other technologies, satellite can deliver broadband services to those areas now.

- Optic fibre. Optical fibre can deliver high bandwidth now and, as the technology develops, will be able to deliver even higher bandwidths. Under Government policy, fibre will be delivered to 98% of the Australian population. Much of Telstra's existing network is fibre and, if it is awarded the tender to provide a national broadband network, will be the provider of fibre to the node with open access arrangements for other service providers to compete with Telstra.
- Hybrid fibre/coaxial cable (HFC) is what currently provides pay television services, mostly in metropolitan areas, but can be configured to provide broadband services as well.
- ADSL technology – is currently the most common form of broadband. It can deliver broadband speeds up to 24 Mbit/s for downloads for the most advanced form of ADSL. The limitations on the service, however, include the distance from the exchange and the number of subscribers on the line.
- Wireless. The Next G network is delivering top speeds (peaking at 21 mbps this year and 42 mbps next year) and 'has removed the 'city-country divide' whereby rural customers now pay the same for high speed connections enjoyed by their city cousins'. The limiting factor will be the topology.

Discussion: Issues raised included:

- Length of contracts for new services such as 3G
- Cost of downloads for products, particularly 3G
- How does the FTTN proposal fit with residential villages – should there be a node for the village – and what is the density of population served by a node
- What about villages on a PABX – how can that be upgraded

Dan Scott, Marketing Manager, Westnet

Dan discussed the background of Westnet – its regional heritage in WA. It is now the 5th – 6th largest ISP in Australia, with about half its customers outside of WA. Westnet has recently been purchased by iiNet but has retained its identity in the iiNet structure. It provides DSL services, and, over a year ago, started providing satellite services under the Broadband Guarantee Program. They are not an infrastructure builder although iiNet is. Their focus is providing regional services and their call centre is in WA. Their focus is on customer service.

Discussion: Issues raised included:

- The proposed NBN, including mention of operational and separation of Telstra. (Tony Hancox summarised Telstra's reasons for opposition to structural separation. They are already

- operationally separate and, if they win the tender, will continue to provide open access to competitors
- Obtaining/cost of email addresses in retirement villages
- Discussion of a village that has its own wireless connection

Afternoon Session: Discussion by participants

What they use broadband/the Internet for:

- Contact family and friends interstate/overseas
- Accessing digital jazz, news, providing counselling
- Work, research
- Runs an 'in house' help desk
- Cheap to chat with overseas friends/family
- Family blog and online chat
- Banking, holiday arrangements, sharing photos
- Family trees/family research
- eBay, forums, buying clothes
- computers-digital imaging
- powerpoint, paint job pro
- comment – 'fascinating, a bit frightening place'

Comments/concerns:

- Problems with overseas call centres
- Prices are all the same
- Problems getting service
- Don't get information on service updates
- Dealing with the 'monolith' of BigPond
- Lack of support for new technology – both Telstra and smaller ISPs
- Language of technology – the jargon not comprehensible – need translation to our level
- Can't afford to have technician to come out
- Oldies dealing with hand me down computers (from kids)
- Computer upgrades use up download limit
- Problem downloading latest security software – uses up downloads
- Security software downloads should be free
- dexterity in using computers problem an issue

Their services

- One group from telecentre installed own wireless connection
- Suggestion to have wireless bypass of PABX
- Have converted the computer room into an Internet café