



LINKAGES – Edition 34

Portable Document Format

Despite the rapid uptake of broadband technologies in Australia, there are still many people making their way around the internet on the backs of dialup modems. Website administrators would do well to keep low bandwidth users in mind when creating and updating their websites, especially if the majority of their visitors are based in rural locations. Graphic designs and other images should be sufficiently compressed without sacrificing too much image quality (see Linkages 33) and document storage formats should be considered carefully. Despite the majority of document work being done using the Microsoft Office suite, it is highly recommended that alternative storage formats be considered. Office documents are typically stored with little or no compression and can be edited by third parties once downloaded.

The Portable Document Format (PDF), developed by Adobe Systems, is a platform independent file format with support for data compression. This means that a PDF document can be viewed on any computer system (Windows, Linux, Mac, etc) with a decent PDF reader and the file size can be reduced to cater for those with limited internet connections. Documents cannot be easily edited and some PDF writers provide more advanced security features. PDF readers are freely available, with the most common being Adobe's Acrobat Reader (currently up to version 7.0.7). LCC Gateway councils can instantly download a copy from their Gateway machine – http://gw/files/adberdr70_enu_full.exe

PDF writers are available in commercial and freeware forms. Adobe's writer product, Acrobat, is the first that comes to mind, despite being a full commercial product with a fairly high price tag. Thankfully, free versions are available in the form of PrimoPDF (www.primopdf.org) and CutePDF (www.cutepdf.com), with PrimoPDF being the most fully featured of the two. All 3 make use of virtual printer setups where users print documents to be converted to the special PDF "printer".

Metropolitan Broadband Blackspots Program

The federal minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan released the guidelines for the \$50Million Metropolitan Broadband Connect Program on March 8, 2006.

The purpose of the program to attract service providers to delivering broadband to those on the fringes of metropolitan areas, or other metropolitan broadband "blackspots" areas, through the provision of subsidies. Operationally, the program will be similar to the now defunct HIBIS (higher bandwidth incentive scheme) program that targeted rural and remote regions, whereby attraction of service providers is primarily through the establishment of demand registers.

The final program guidelines and provisional demand register can be accessed through the Metro Broadband Connect website at www.dcita.gov.au/tel/mbc.

Connect Australia – Broadband Connect and Clever Networks

On 17 August 2005 the Federal Government announced a \$2B package to implement broadband across remote, rural and regional Australia. The Association provided a submission on the paper and the following recommendations were made:

- That a specific strategic coordinating component be established between *Broadband Connect* and *Clever Networks* to ensure optimisation of the return on investment through funded projects being leveraged to the fullest extent.
- That any direct public expenditure for infrastructure necessitates that this infrastructure be practicably accessible to the open market on an equitable basis. Specifically, any "shareable" physical (non-active) infrastructure improvements (for example communication masts, equipment huts, conduit etc) should be vested in Local Government for administration, and that access to this infrastructure for service providers be granted on a cost recovery basis. Cost recovery should also factor in the total lifecycle costs of maintaining and administering this infrastructure for the benefit of the community.
- That a specific list of such publicly funded infrastructure improvements be held and maintained in a formal register to facilitate planning purposes for service providers and interested stakeholders, including the current and future Demand Aggregation Broker (DAB) program.
- That the concept of "regional peering points" be considered as a viable innovation supporting the delivery of sustainable broadband services to rural and regional Australia, and funded through a strategic component of *Connect Australia*.

For further information please contact Alden Lee on 9213 2080.

Goodbye and Good Luck

Our best wishes go to Kieran McCluskey as he moves on to undertake new challenges in the resource sector

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An Australian Government Initiative



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

LINKING COUNCILS AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Western Australian Local Government Association, Local Government House, 15 Altona Street West Perth WA 6005, PO Box 1544 West Perth WA 6872

Telephone: (08) 9213 2016 Facsimile: (08) 9322 2611 Email: info@linkingcouncils.com Website: www.linkingcouncils.com