

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

FACT SHEET 8 NATIONAL BROADBAND

Nationally, local government supports the development of an affordable high-speed broadband network for all communities across Australia, including commitment to capacity building in regional areas in ICT skills development.

Local government has a crucial interest in the development of information communications technology (ICT) across Australia and supports access to affordable, high-speed broadband technology for all Australians.

Local government's interest in broadband falls into two categories:

1. Development of electronic local government services, thereby increasing the range of services available, introducing innovative service delivery and improving the cost effectiveness of providing traditional services; and
2. Ensuring that local communities have access to affordable high-speed broadband, thereby stimulating economic and social development of the regions.

ALGA's *State of the Regions 2006–07 Report*, written by National Economics, predicted a growing role for local government in helping to provide broadband internet services to Australian communities. The report found a growing trend for local government to become active in providing broadband backbone infrastructure.

The report points out that Australia ranks at the bottom of developed countries for broadband internet penetration but that the take-up rate is growing rapidly. It outlines the many benefits of enhanced telecommunications. It points to how better telecommunications can improve regional competitiveness by providing the infrastructure to attract knowledge-based businesses and create opportunities for new knowledge-based enterprises and linkages to global markets.

High-speed broadband would also allow councils to introduce innovation in the delivery of services, to achieve cost-effectiveness in service delivery and to ensure that local residents have improved access to information and services. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration would allow synergies to be achieved through the roll-out of e-government services, meaning that members of the community could benefit from 'one-stop-shop' service delivery.