

Comments on

**Broadband Connect and Clever Networks**

**Discussion Paper**

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**Australian Seniors**  
Computer Clubs Association **ASCCA**



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## Introduction to ASCCA

The Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association, known as **ASCCA**, is the National Peak Body for Seniors and Technology. It is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. **ASCCA** is a Public Benevolent Institution endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office. All members of **ASCCA's** Board of Management are volunteers, they are also seniors who make use of their wide range of experience and qualifications to help seniors become computer literate and access the Internet.

**ASCCA** holds positions on many Telecommunications Consumer Councils, Ministerial committees and is a foundation partner in the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Program. **ASCCA** was honoured to receive the 2005 NSW Seniors Week Achievement award for Education/Life Long Learning.

The Association will help start new clubs, advise and assist existing clubs; liaise with the three spheres of Government and other organisations on behalf of the membership, organise seminars, trainings and like activities and seek out discounts for members. It provides a channel for communication between like-minded people, who want to share in the potential of the computer age to serve their individual and community goals. **It has become a catalyst to enthuse, encourage, empower and assist seniors to explore the satisfaction and advantages of using computer technology.**

At present **ASCCA** has more than 100 member clubs throughout Australia and there are steering committees working to established further clubs. **ASCCA** has clubs in every state of Australia in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. **ASCCA** is keen to assist seniors living in regional, rural and remote areas so that they too can have opportunities similar to those living in metropolitan areas.

**ASCCA's** services are provided by volunteers to assist older and disabled Australians who are unable to use and access computer technology. In this day when most younger Australians have the knowledge to use computers, the older Australian is often disadvantaged by not having been taught at school or work how to obtain information via the internet and the benefits available through using computer technology. **ASCCA** seeks to redress this imbalance.

Mastering simple computer skills and accessing the Internet greatly enhances a senior's self esteem and general well being. It enables them to communicate with family and friends, and to embrace life-long learning in ways they never thought possible before becoming comfortable with using computer-based technologies.

It is estimated that almost 100,000 seniors have learned how to use a computer through the non-threatening, friendly environment provided by Seniors Computer Clubs, or are currently participating in our classes/sessions. In 2002 we have had our first part time employee, funded by a grant from Microsoft for a 12 months period ending December 2002. Because of this we were able to begin to target areas of need rather than just respond to requests for help to start Seniors Computer Clubs. Funding was allocated by the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and IBM to maintain the position until 30 June 2004. Further grants from Microsoft and the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation have ensured the present employment of two of our three part time staff.

We do not receive core funding from any Government Department and need to continuously seek grants and donations to enable us to continue our work. We frequently undertake projects with both State and Federal Government Department support and enjoy an excellent working relationship with them.

**Q1. How can the design and delivery of broadband connect be optimised to achieve long term sustainable quality broadband solutions for regional, rural and remote Australians?**

A1. There are two aspects to the term 'sustainable': technical and financial. Computers require power and technical maintenance. Will remote communities have access to reliable power? Will there be a service centre set up where remote users can parcel up their malfunctioning computers/radio antenna etc at minimal cost? If not, then the program will not be technically sustainable.

The second aspect of sustainability is financial. When the \$871 million runs out, will seniors and other remote users be left to pay the bills for the satellite links? If the funding is not on-going, nor costs kept at a manageable level the program is not sustainable. Seniors will soon drop their broadband if they have a wireless broadband bill of a few thousand to pay.

Where hardwired telephone infrastructure already exists in remote and regional Australia, the services may need to be upgraded to make them capable of achieving the levels of service currently experienced in urban areas of Australia. Alternately mobile phone and radio networks may provide a more economical communication solution.

The services required by many of the senior members of our community do not need to be at the "cutting edge" of technology, but need to be able to provide a simple and reliable service.

Beyond the hardware, the facilities and services available to remote and regional communities need to be easy to use ("user friendly") and meet the needs of the users. There is nothing more frustrating, especially to senior citizens, than to have a facility that purports to provide a service, but is so complex and difficult to use that a science degree is required to understand the instructions and follow the sequences required to perform simple functions.

**Q2. What means can/should be used to encourage further capital investment in infrastructure that will support competitive networks and services under Broadband Connect and beyond?**

A2. Capital investment could be encouraged by a number of vehicles, such as partnership arrangements, or subsidised developments.

All private firms are market oriented and profit motivated. Where there is a large market and therefore a profit to be made, private investment will take place. There exist no market forces which will encourage private infrastructure in "the bush".

For this reason, some of the government's huge surplus needs to be "banked" into a technology future fund. In this way, the inequity between the bush and the cities can be overcome.

**Q3. How can Broadband Connect funding be structure to provide the best incentives for investment?**

A3. By changing the concept of the program from "Broadband Connect" to "Broadband Connect and Maintain." It is not enough to put cables in a house, or an antenna on a roof, and say to the occupants "*Here it is... now use it.*" There is no incentive for any business to put infrastructure in the bush. Unless money is provided and a work order is placed in the hands of a private firm, nothing will happen

**Q4. Is terrestrial or satellite the most appropriate means of delivering broadband in regional, rural and remote areas?**

A4. This will depend on the existing infrastructure, if it can be easily upgraded and the size of the communities to whom the service is to be provided.

This is always going to be a site-specific question. Using microwave radio links instead of cables would be another option?

**Q5. Can satellite be delivered as competitively as terrestrial services?**

A5. This needs to be answered by the relevant technology providers.

The answer would be yes, if the government owns the satellite. If a private consortium puts up the satellite, they will want a return on their money. Who will pay the ongoing bills next year? And the twenty years after that?

Q6.

Q7.

**Q8. Should a system of prioritised funding for services connected in areas of greatest need (beyond what has been provided under the HiBIS two-tiered incentive structure) be introduced?**

A8. The concept of prioritized funding would seem to imply that some areas are going to miss out on funding

**Q 9: What can be done further to overcome barriers to capital investment in sustainable technologies in less commercially viable regional areas?**

A9. A futures technology fund; No market-oriented firm will venture into a small market such as those that exist in rural areas. It is no accident that many small towns have only one petrol garage and probably no bank.

**Q10. How can the high cost of some technologies be reconciled with increasing customer expectations for higher speeds and usage allowances especially in more remote areas?**

A10. The cost of providing some technologies must ultimately reside with the service suppliers and the users, i.e. those who benefit from the service. If the technology cannot be provided at a cost acceptable to all parties involved then the service cannot be justified. Eg. If government departments are benefiting from users on-line access, then part of the cost can be offset against the savings to those departments.

Satellite technology is nowhere near as cheap as cables in the suburbs. A tax-free allowance can be provided to remote users. Remote broadband needs to be considered a production cost, just as much as the diesel a farmer uses for his tractor.

**Q11. Should it be mandatory for program participants under broadband connect to provide additional information as a condition of registration?**

A11. All related to broadband service providers.

**Q12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17.**

A All related to broadband service providers

**Q18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23.**

A All related to broadband service providers

**Q24. Q25. Q26. Q27.**

A. All related to broadband service providers

**Q28. Q29. Q30**

A. Pricing should be set at rates that the communities are able to meet. It is no use providing a state of the art broadband service if no one can afford to use it.

# Clever Networks

*What form of broker network will provide the best outcome?*

**Q1. - Q7.**

*Targeted services for Clever Networks initiatives*

**Q8. Are health, education, emergency services and local government the appropriate services for Clever Networks to target?**

A8. If these services are not to be targeted by Clever Networks, I cannot think of a valid reason for its creation. Regional and remote communities require the same services as in the rest of the community, but access to these services is often much more difficult. Being able to get information relating to these important areas can help to reduce the isolation.

**Q9. Should there be priorities within this group?**

A9. It is generally not possible to perform development on all of these services at the same time, therefore there should be some prioritisation. This prioritisation is best determined by the stake holders in consultation with key targeted users or their representative bodies.

**Q10. What other sectors, if any, should be considered?**

A10. News and media groups, and other commercial operations selling/providing goods or services to remote and regional communities can be considered, as they can be used to help defray the cost of the networks. For seniors, apart from the above services, the services of most interest to seniors are those bringing family and community closer together.

**Q11. Should there be a focus on particular applications/sectors which will require and drive network or industry capabilities?**

A11. Community support services are very underrated in their ability to satisfy the needs of groups such as senior citizens and the disabled. More attention needs to be focused on community self support groups via the volunteer organisations and their ability to provide lasting beneficial services that often are not the precinct of the professional support service.

Q12.

*Infrastructure and application-focussed investment issues*

Q13. 14. 15.

**Q16. What key strategic investments in broadband infrastructure have the potential to provide the best outcomes?**

A16. Providing broadband infrastructure is not likely to have significant financial benefits. The benefits are likely to come from improved services, particularly in the areas of health, education, and other community services. This will ultimately lead to a better quality of life for our regional and remote communities.

If broadband infrastructure is not provided to the regional and remote communities, they will continue to be marginalised and fall further behind the rest of the population.

*Funding for Clever Networks initiatives*

**Q17. Are there complementary sources of funding/contributions which should be considered in developing the guidelines for the Clever Networks?**

A17. The economics of building a broadband infrastructure network for regional and remote Australians make it a very difficult undertaking for a non-government organisation. It will, however, be possible for various interest groups to be able to identify those areas where they feel they can contribute some of the services required to build the infrastructure. With the assistance and co-ordination of the various arms of the government the efforts of many of the interest groups can support the broadband infrastructure.

*Utilising new and emerging technologies*

Q18 Q19. Q20. Q21.

*New infrastructure access arrangements*

Q22. 23. 24.

## Additional Comments

Key areas not mentioned in the discussion paper related to the post construction phase of the infrastructure. Experience has shown that unless new initiatives are well supported, the take up rate and the success of the project can be seriously restricted. It is recommended that both on-line and telephone contact support be part of the infrastructure Clever Network specification. Training programs should be provided, at least in the initial phases, to kick start the take up of the broadband services.

The existing network of Seniors Computer Clubs through the co-ordination of ASCCA can provide technical support, training and education to a large percentage of the senior population. Extension of this network to the regional and remote communities through **ASCCA** will further support the communities and further enhance the take-up rate and overall success of the project.

**ASCCA** is well positioned to extend the current network of senior computer clubs to provide the level of service required by seniors in regional and remote communities.

One of the assumptions of the discussion paper is well encapsulated by this statement on page 22

**'A significant issue raised during recent Online Communications Council discussions is the need for Clever Networks to:**

- **Be self-sustaining beyond the life of seed funding; and**
- **Not require further Australian Government or State/Territory assistance or intervention for the capability to continue or be progressively upgraded in the future.'**

If seed funding is required to get the project started in the first place, why would it not be required in the future to maintain it?

A broadband program is national infrastructure, in the same way as a road or a railway line is. Like a road or rail line, there is the large initial construction component, and then the maintenance component, including making the road wider when the traffic increases.

It is unlikely that the broadband network will be self-sustaining after the initial connection.

Peter Stanhope suggests the following scenario.

"Let's take a typical farm situation.

Joe Boggs has a sheep farm 280 km west of Gulargembone. His nearest neighbour is 40 km away. He has no running water, and no electricity (His power comes from solar panels and a diesel generator. Water is in tanks, when it rains). His children are being taught their schooling at home, often via the internet.

Through the government program, he gets a broadband satellite antenna. It costs the government \$10,000 to install. His annual broadband bill is \$800, of which \$60% is subsidized under the seeding program. Thus his broadband costs him \$320... similar to the amount paid by his metropolitan peers.

It's now 2007, and seed funding is gone. Is he going to be able to afford \$800 in a drought year? And what if lightning hits the antenna and wipes out both the antenna and the computer? Will he be up for all the repairs? Will the antenna & service be removed if he can't pay? Will there be any tax relief for what is an essential farm cost?"

## **ASCCA would welcome the opportunity to develop a project under the Coordinated Communications infrastructure fund.**

The outline of the project follows:

The overall project will seek to empower seniors by providing

- an awareness of the advantages of using Broadband,
- an ability to use the Internet by providing initial training and
- the establishment of a support network for ongoing use of the internet

**\*In some cases the project would lead to the establishment of a community hub and a public access point to allow for community use of the Internet and ongoing peer support.**

Hanging Rock/Nundle has been identified as the first site for a Community Hub.

### Stage 1

Developing interaction and trust between the chosen community and **ASCCA** via email/letter/phone

Hold a community meeting for those interested in learning about the use of Broadband and basic computer skills. Form a steering committee of local people to work with ASCCA and local agencies.

### Stage 2

Supply necessary hardware and software; ASCCA training officer, Peter Stanhope to install computers and do a block of basic training.

Provide senior friendly manuals developed by ASCCA and provide ongoing support via email/phone

### Stage 3

Collaboration with other groups/organisations in the area and develop a Public Access Point

**\*On other occasions a two day workshop will be held to enable seniors to undertake a training course to help them understand the advantages of using Broadband, how to obtain a connection and how to use it in a cost effective manner.**

It is difficult to access a venue (available at a time that suits seniors) which is equipped with the necessary hardware and software for a training course. A mobile learning kit would need to be organised; comprising 10 laptop computers, a printer and associated equipment plus suitable wheeled containers to allow all the equipment to be packed into them; these containers would fit into the boot of a station wagon.

This 'Techmobile' would make it possible for **ASCCA** to provide a training officer to take the Techmobile to a regional or rural area and conduct training sessions to help introduce people to Broadband. It would also be used to conduct training sessions on new innovations or adaptive technology.

## **Selection Criterion 1:**

### **The nature, range and quality of the services to be delivered by the project:**

- **ASCCA** has been working with seniors since 1998 and has developed considerable skills. Older people can be very hesitant to learn how to use technology that is new to them. They want to learn specific things, preferably from their peers and at their own pace.
- **ASCCA** has helped to establish seniors computer clubs and to support existing clubs. In their friendly non-threatening environment almost 100,000 seniors have learned how to use a computer.
- **ASCCA** has developed the ability to conduct high standard workshops, seminars and trainings.
- **ASCCA** has published manuals and guides that are user friendly and well accepted by seniors.
- **ASCCA** has three part time staff members (all of whom are seniors) who are well able to advise and support seniors. Ongoing support will be available via email (or phone while they gain skills in using email!) Other established clubs will also be willing to provide support and, when practical enable new users to visit their clubs.
- **ASCCA** is working on another project which will eventually lead to webcam interaction for isolated seniors so that they can interact with both ASCCA staff and other clubs.
- There is no doubt about the need. Only about 20% of seniors in Australia use the Internet!

## **Section Criterion 2:**

### **The benefits and outcomes of the project in terms of improvements it will make to the delivery of services to regional communities**

This project will assist older and disabled Australians to access skills such as using the internet, using search engines, email, and the numerous computer based applications that will significantly contribute to making older people's lives more interesting. Mastering simple computer skills greatly enhances their self esteem and general well being. It enables them to communicate with family and friends, and to embrace life-long learning in ways they never thought possible before becoming comfortable using computer based technologies.

The senior who can't use the Internet is disadvantaged. Government Department websites are becoming more user friendly and often depend on their websites to keep clients informed! Information available on the websites of Health, Education, and transport departments, and their own local government sites enable them to find answers to questions and concerns. Centrelink, Seniors Card and the Seniors Portal will quickly help the senior who has the ability to access the internet to keep up with necessary information.

Think of the joy it will give both grandparent and grandchild when they can exchange emails!

### **Selection Criterion 3:**

#### **The extent to which the services delivered by the project are new and additional:**

ASCCA does not seek to work in isolation and will always work with any other agency/Department who is delivering a similar service. Long experience of working with seniors has helped us to know the learning styles most suitable for seniors. Classes are available in many areas through TAFE, Community Colleges and other adult learning facilities but frequently the cost of such courses are too high for seniors on a limited budget. They also prefer to learn with other seniors and from their peers. Mostly courses need to be modified to allow seniors to learn at their own pace.

Projects such as we are proposing require additional funding. We will, of course, continue to try and achieve financial support to enable us to undertake all or part of this project but it will not proceed without funding.

### **Selection Criterion 4**

#### **The nature and range of organisations involved in the project and the effectiveness of the corporate structure.**

ASCCA is a foundation partner in the Microsoft Unlimited Potential program so we will be able to obtain the necessary software for this project from Microsoft so that component of the budget will be covered.

The manuals required for this project have been or will be created by ASCCA. The only cost to the project would be printing/burning.

The Community Hub for Hanging Rock/Nundle proposal already has input from local government, University of Armidale, The Nurse Practitioner, Hunter New England Area Health, Nundle Health Service.

ASCCA is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and has a Board of Management consisting of 9 people who are all seniors and actively participating in their own local clubs. The board is elected annually by the member clubs. There are three part time employees, all are seniors and all are highly qualified. (full details available should you need such info). Our latest annual report is available on our website [www.seniorcomputing.org](http://www.seniorcomputing.org)

## Selection Criterion 5

**The viability of the financial plan for the project, and the level of funding from sources other than the Australian Government.**

### **Installation of equipment and two 2 day training workshops**

Training workshop 1 will be for potential trainers of new Community Hub and will include instruction on installation of equipment, train the trainer and instruction in basic computer skills and the use of the Internet. (6 potential trainers)

Training workshop 2 will be for new trainers and students and will cover basic computer skills and the use of the Internet (6 trainers + 12 students)

Instruction manuals will be provided both as hard copy and with disk to allow for additional future copying.

ASCCA Training Officer will be available by phone, email and webcam to provide any additional support, encouragement and training required.

### **Projected Budget:** (break down on next page)

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED per New Community Hub ...	\$ 12836.00
2 x 2 day training workshops ...	\$ 3,750.00
Sub total per new centre	\$16586.00
Sub total for 2 additional centres	\$33172.00
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED for Techmobile ...	\$10,000.00
2 x 2 day trainings ...	\$ 3,750.00
Sub total for first training	\$13,750.00
Sub total for 2 additional trainings	\$ 7500.00
Administration ...	\$ 7,000.00
<b>Total</b> ...	<b><u>\$ 78,008.00</u></b>

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED per New Community Hub

6 second-hand computers with DVD drives purchased from WorkVentures + delivery	... ..	\$ 2,340.00
6 copies Microsoft XP operating System & 6 copies MS Office	...	\$ 8,268.00
6 copies of Dragon Naturally Speaking @ \$299.00	... ..	\$ 1,794.00
6 licenses for Deep Freeze @ \$45.00 per license (discounted price negotiated by ASCCA)	... ..	\$ 414.00
6 second hand laptops, purchased from WorkVentures for borrowing by students until they can purchase their own computers (with software) We can legally copy the xp & office, not sure about laptop use of Dragon on both pc and laptop.	... ..	\$ 3,240.00
1 LAN switch and LAN cables	... ..	\$ 50.00
1 spare mouse and 1 spare keyboard	... ..	\$ 25.00
6 headsets for VOIP	...(\$21 ea)	\$ 126.00
6 Webcams and software	... ..	\$ 480.00
Internet connection	... ..	\$ 2,800.00
1 whiteboard on a trolley; whiteboard pens.	... ..	\$ 290.00
9 gas-lift computer chairs. \$99 each. (O H & S requirements)	...	\$ 891.00
3 tables large enough for 2 workstations each table	...\$	240.00
1 Metal storage cupboard	... ..	\$ 146.00
		<hr/>
		\$ 21104.00
Less cost of Ms software (covered by Microsoft grant to ASCCA)		<u>\$ 8,268.00</u> -
	<b>Total</b>	\$ 12836.00

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## 2 x 2 day trainings

Hire of venue, catering for 2 x 2 day workshops	...	...	\$ 400.00
10 days salary to cover preparation and delivery of 2 X 2 day workshops (work cover + on costs covered by ASCCA)	...	...	\$ 1,700.00
Travel	...	...	\$ 1,000.00
Accommodation & meals for 4 days	...	...	\$ 600.00
Manuals and disks for 20 trainers/students	...	...	\$ 50.00
		<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$ 3,750.00</u></b>

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## **Equipment required for Tecmobile kit:**

10 laptop computers	...	...	\$6,500
ten sets of Ms Office, MS XP,	...	...	\$ ----
ten copies of Dragon;	...	...	\$1,900.00
one copy of AB Tutor	...	...	\$ 250.00
one compact printer;	...	...	\$ 125.00
one network hub;	...	...	\$ 48.00
Cabling for LAN hub. 10 x \$5	...	...	\$ 50.00
2 Containers on wheels (that can be handled by a woman) (Solid travel cases on wheels)			\$ 280.00
Co-ordination and purchase of needed equipment, installation of software	...	...	\$ 1,000.00
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 10,000.00</b>

**Selection Criterion 6:**

**The degree to which the project is sustainable after the CCIF ceases**

**Selection Criterion 7:**

**The quality of the project plan and risk management plan.**

It is proposed that the community hubs will be set up following the ASCCA Development Kit which was produced as a guideline for the formation of a community organisation. No clubs established under these guidelines have closed as they are managed by the actual club participants.

Even if ASCCA folded, clubs formed would be able to continue.

ASCCA has the skills and ability to maintain the equipment purchased as the basis for the techmobile. Microsoft funding will ensure at least one staff member for at least three more years.

**Selection Criterion 8"**

**The level of management expertise available to implement and manage the project.**

Both staff and management committee are well qualified and experienced to plan, implement and evaluate this project.

Overall responsibility for the project will be taken by Nan Bosler, OAM AD Adult Education, AD Community Organisation; B Ed, Grad Dip Local & Applied History and Masters of Local Gov. Management.