

**online and communications council**

**Framework for the collaborative development  
and use of broadband in Australia**



**We**, the members of the Online and Communications Council, express our commitment to this Framework as a basis to work together to enhance the development and effective use of broadband in Australia.

We agree that promoting the development and effective use of broadband will enhance Australia's economic performance and environmental and social wellbeing.

Australia should aspire to become one of the world's leading digital economies. We intend to work together to facilitate this outcome.

**We share a vision of a cohesive national approach to stimulate and strengthen economic, environmental and social outcomes, through the development and effective use of broadband, for all Australians.**



## OVERVIEW

The Online and Communications Council (the Council) was established by the Council of Australian Governments in 1997 as the peak ministerial forum for consultation on, and coordination of, information and communications matters of national strategic importance across all governments.

A key task of the Council is to propose strategic priority areas for online and communications policy and program development. In May 2008, the Council agreed that a *Framework for the collaborative development and use of broadband in Australia* was an important step forward.

Australia's development will require world-class communications infrastructure and services. Similarly, high-speed broadband access is critical to achieve business competitiveness, social networking and the promotion of social inclusion, and the delivery of public and private sector services. This Framework reinforces the need for the collaborative development and effective use of broadband.

## PRINCIPLES

Four key principles guide this Framework:

1. Australian governments recognise the importance of being world-class in the deployment and use of broadband as the basis for domestic and international competitiveness.
2. All Australians should have equitable access to high-speed broadband, and the social and economic benefits this capability brings.
3. Broadband and the digital economy should be driven by a pro-competitive environment that advances the interests of users, promotes efficiency and choice, maximises flexibility, and fosters innovation in the development and application of broadband technologies.
4. Each government jurisdiction has different roles, processes and responsibilities, and these different roles should be acknowledged, respected and utilised in a cohesive national approach to broadband development and use.

## ROLES

The Australian Government maintains responsibility for telecommunications services policy and the regulatory environment, which includes the roll-out and operation of the National Broadband Network. In performing this role, the Australian Government consults with other jurisdictions and the private sector as required.

The Australian Government continues to safeguard broadband opportunities for all Australians, particularly for those in remote areas, through the Australian Broadband Guarantee and other initiatives, where commercial investment does not achieve the required outcomes.

All governments can enhance government service delivery through innovative and effective use of broadband, including in health, education, emergency services and the environment.

All governments can foster inclusion and participation in the digital economy by addressing barriers to access and effective use, including by building confidence, trust and expertise.

All governments acknowledge the primary role of the private sector in delivering broadband investment, infrastructure and services, and in the collaborative development of technical standards and industry operating arrangements.

All governments also acknowledge that communities can have a major role in raising awareness and coordinating local initiatives to stimulate the deployment and effective use of broadband.

## PRIORITY AREAS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATION

The following priority areas, objectives and strategies have been identified for collaborative action:

### Priority Area 1: Broadband availability

**Objective:** All Australians have access to high-speed broadband at equitable service levels and prices.

**Strategies:** We support the Australian Government initiative to establish the National Broadband Network to deliver high-speed broadband to 98% of Australian homes and businesses, and to provide comparable broadband services for those not covered by the National Broadband Network.

We agree to extend the benefits of the National Broadband Network and related initiatives by:

- Continuing to develop better practice models for the provision of broadband infrastructure and services in regional, rural and remote areas.
- Utilising the benefits of government purchasing and contract arrangements, where feasible, to optimise broadband availability.
- Promoting consistent and cohesive planning guidelines for state and local government authorities, and effective infrastructure implementation, that facilitates the efficient deployment of broadband.
- Encouraging open standards to ensure interoperability.
- Encouraging open access to infrastructure to promote competition.
- Extending the environmental benefits of broadband by promoting green ICT policies and smart building applications.

### Priority Area 2: Broadband take-up

**Objective:** Australians are fully aware of the benefits of high-speed broadband, and are able to choose a broadband service that meets their needs.

**Strategies:** We agree to work towards:

- Identifying and reducing social, cultural, economic, educational and other barriers that people face in becoming aware of the benefits of broadband and the internet.
- Fostering programs and initiatives that promote the availability of affordable broadband.
- Recognising and enabling the potential of broadband to provide enhanced services to people in regional, rural and remote communities, including Indigenous communities, and those with disabilities and special needs.
- Building confidence among users, and strengthening the resilience and security of broadband infrastructure and applications through researching and addressing emerging security risks.

### Priority Area 3: Broadband usage

**Objective:** Australians use high-speed broadband to improve economic, environmental and social wellbeing.

**Strategies:** We agree to work towards:

- Supporting innovation and best practice in the development and use of broadband applications and services in the public and private sectors, including education, health and other services.
- Improved government service delivery through world-class use of broadband and the internet.
- Encouraging and supporting research to identify the economic and social benefits of high-speed broadband, to encourage further investment in such services.



## NEXT STEPS

1. We will task the National Broadband Development Group to develop and implement an annual work plan, addressing the priority areas, objectives and strategies contained in this Framework, including developing a strategy for measuring progress of the priority areas.
2. The National Broadband Development Group will report to the Council, through the Standing Committee, on the progress of its annual work plan.
3. The Framework and the National Broadband Development Group's work plan will be reviewed regularly, and updated as necessary, to reflect changed needs of the Australian community, and further developments in broadband services and the digital economy.



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