

ATUG Focus – ATUG 2009 Broadband Awards showcase the benefits of effective use of broadband

ATUG Awards in 2009 demonstrated the power of broadband to change the way business and government services are being delivered. Much of the broadband conversation is about the entertainment and information possibilities. The Awards highlighted the potential of game-changing broadband throughout the economy.

ATUG Awards in 2009 show how higher speed broadband services are encouraging end users to innovate with new services or new ways of delivering existing services.

From ATUG's perspective the theoretical discussions about whether broadband will make a difference are being overtaken by what end users are doing with broadband and their plans for the future.

The OECD has been researching broadband and networked ICTs -

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/7/40781696.pdf>

The report explores the ways in which broadband is becoming an integral part of OECD economies and some of the structural changes that result from this. The main focus is on the impact on businesses, via productivity, organisational innovations, increased competition and the opportunities for the globalisation of an increasing range of tasks, especially in services. All of these will impact on employment and labour market flexibility.

ATUG has been focused on broadband availability in Australia for a number of years - most recently contributing to the NBN framework deliberations. ATUG's Regional Roadshow has concentrated on encouraging demand side awareness and take-up of broadband services. ATUG's NBN focus is on ubiquitously available, affordable "game-changing" broadband.

ATUG's view is that end users will build their own "business-case" for faster speed broadband and put their own economic value on the service - based on their own experience of higher speed broadband.

ATUG Awards in 2009 showcased some very interesting examples of what organisations are doing with broadband. In many cases government is playing a role of early adopter. The following case studies are examples of effective use of broadband

Business

ELK Software Group was awarded first place for their eNewsletters Online application for small business users. The product is easy to use, allowing small business to create a newsletter system to communicate information and provide good customer service to their clients in an efficient, cost effective way. "The internet is an essential business tool."

"Continuous service delivery is essential."

Pacnet was awarded a Highly Commended for their Task Retail Point of Sale Solution. The PoS solution allows retail food franchise companies to communicate far more easily and reliably to each other, using broadband to deliver access to centrally held applications (eg real-time sales data, interactive loyalty programs, customised promotions, queue-busting SMS ordering) improving efficiency and effectiveness and at a cost that works for small business. This system replaced a dial-up system with its inherent delays, lack of reliability and inefficiencies. "Head Office is connected directly to every terminal in every store...and it's the direct, broadband-based connection that allows real-time power. The broadband connection is not the end, it's the means to the end."

Community

Livewire.org.au was awarded first place for their service that integrates fixed, mobile and wireless broadband to connect young people, living with serious or chronic illness or a disability, to other young people. This use of broadband was innovative because of its versatility and flexibility, modifying applications to connect people isolated from their peers. Broadband enables the social networking tools that give the interactive, community experience that is at the core of Livewire. "Livewire breaks down the urban, regional and rural barriers and enables members to make friends from all over the country."

Tasmanet was awarded a Highly Commended for their project, providing the Huon Valley with a regional broadband wireless network, which allows residents and businesses in the area access to opportunities such as VoIP, Software as a Service and collaboration tools. Huon Valley Council is now able to network their remote offices reducing travel time and expenses and to offer more online services to residents. "Never underestimate the real value of telecommunications for enhancing community relations and services...never underestimate the time needed for site access for towers."

Education

The Northern Territory STARS Satellite Network was awarded first place for their satellite network, connecting 50 schools, 25 health clinics and 160 distance education students in remote areas of the Northern Territory with no access to fixed line broadband. The new service means online health and education services can now reach people who could not access these new services without broadband. Interactive distance learning technologies allow the delivery of education and training programs in areas that were too small and remote to allow delivery of local teaching and training services. The new network also allows the extension of health information systems into clinics which provide the only health care services for residents. "Services will be extended to communities that were previously uneconomic to reach."

The NSW Department of Education and Training was awarded a highly commended for their effective provision of a broadband network that connects 1000 classrooms to videoconferencing and interactive whiteboard services. The new network has enabled the development of new methods of teaching and learning. Interactive discussions can be conducted between multiple classrooms, real time experiences

from outside Australia can be included in teaching and collaborative tools are now part of the learning experience. “The project has highlighted the disparity of broadband services across the State.”

Government

The Department of Environment and Conservation (WA)’s Pollution Response Unit won the award in the government category for its co-ordination between emergency services and its management of video and online records when responding to environmental incidents. “This example is extraordinary as we have been looking for a solution for years and found it in locally developed technology. We have shown the capability to our US EPA colleagues and they do not have anything like it. Situational awareness is being enabled by broadband.”

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council was awarded a Highly Commended for its Connecting the Coast project, which has brought Broadband to many potential business and residential users on the Sunshine coast. “An ex-timber town of less than 7000 residents has experienced great social and economic upheaval in the last 6 years with the closure of two mills and several other anchor employment sources in town. Connecting the town to the fibre cable, constructing the Data Centre at the site of the old Butter Factory and plans for a new library have raised the fortunes of this small regional community by increasing its economic security.”

The Tasmanian Broadband Development Program was also awarded a Highly Commended for their support and facilitation of council based development of Broadband in Tasmania. Several councils are looking at the deployment of next generation municipal management applications in areas such as security, automated plant operation, monitoring and information recording for assets such as parklands, car parks, water treatment plants, libraries, street lights, roads and municipal properties. New businesses such as a printing facility, a naval architecture consultancy, research and education centres are being established because of the availability of high speed broadband.

Health

Loddon Mallee Health Alliance won the award for their Virtual Trauma Critical Care Unit (ViTCCU). The project is about leading edge technology used to bring about better and timely health outcomes for trauma and critical care patients outside metropolitan areas. Outcomes include improved quality of care, reduced cost of care, medical and family transport costs and disruptions to local communities. Broadband supports the use of high definition video-conferencing, transfer of high resolution digital images and real time patient information for bedside monitors to remotely located specialists. The goal is “to change the model of health service delivery to allow clinicians to access patient information anywhere, anytime on any device.” “Integration across the health care system can only be achieved by enabling a reliable and secure NBN that will allow lower cost capabilities for everyone in Australia – not just metro or regional communities.”

Loddon Mallee Health Alliance was also awarded a Highly Commended for its Connecting Clients 2 Care (CC2C) Project for its empowering of patients and the clear savings it provides to patients. Patients are able to self-monitor vital signs

knowing that the information is transmitted to their health service provider. “As a result of having access to this information for the first time, clients are making positive changes to their health behaviour because they understand that the measurements are indicators of underlying changes in their health.” “Cost benefits of over \$1000 pa were identified per monitored patient compared to unmonitored patients.”

VidCo was awarded a Highly Commended for their Health Videophone Service which provides patients with an innovative videophone exchange using synchronous video over broadband, enabling health professionals to care for remotely located patients. “The medication management application enabled by broadband is very innovative; it is definitely an Australia first and possibly a world first. The service has created new markets for broadband, including individuals with no computer literacy and homes with no computer or internet access. It delivers health services to people with dementia and chronic illness ...it keeps people out of hospitals and nursing homes.” “High quality broadband is needed for effective use of real-time video.” “Implementing a telehealth service needs attention to far more than technology alone.”

The NBN process will take its next step shortly. The potential for Australia from ubiquitously available, affordable, high-speed broadband is clearly demonstrated by the case studies from ATUG’s 2009 Broadband Award winners.