



**Future Forums 2009**

**Developing Australia's Digital Economy in the  
Long-term Interests of End Users**

## **ATUG Future Forums 2009**

### **Background**

ATUG Future Forums provide an opportunity for ATUG members to be part of agenda setting discussions for Australia's communications end users.

In 2007, ATUG Future Forums looked at the need for higher speed broadband platforms for Australia. The forums concluded that end users were interested in high speed broadband services BUT that there was also an ongoing need for slower speed services for a number of applications, that ubiquity was essential for genuine migration of Australia's communications capability to best practice and that affordability was a key to achieving the long-term interests of end users in a high speed broadband world.

In 2008, ATUG held a series of Future Forums to discuss end user interests in the National Broadband Network proposal, the NBN Regulatory Framework and NBN Remote Area options. These Forums culminated in ATUG's submissions to the NBN Expert Panel, to the NBN Regulatory Framework Discussion and to the Remote Area Solutions process.

During 2008 and into 2009 ATUG has supported the NBN process and has been urging Government to continue with its commitment to move Australia into a next generation broadband world, but without losing the benefits of competition which has served end user interests so well over the past 12 years. ATUG has been pressing for the NBN opportunity to be used to promote competition and benefits for end users.

The NBN will provide the platform for Australia's for future high speed broadband needs for years. Combined with developments in mobile broadband platforms, ATUG's view is that the infrastructure needed to support the development of Australia's Digital Economy will be in place.

### **Future Forums 2009**

In 2009, ATUG will use the Future Forum discussions to focus attention on the needs of businesses operating in a Digital Australia for policies and programs which:

- reflect new platforms,
- encourage innovation
- provide a strong integrity and assurance framework

and will support business, government and community organisations working in an information rich, videocomms friendly, interactive, transaction-intensive economy.

The 2009 Future Forums will look at

- Infrastructure and Access Services – NBN and 3G mobile developments; Digital TV; coverage, competition and consumer framework; quality of service options, informed choice
- Innovation and Applications – new businesses, new business and government service models, new ways of working, new skills,
- Integrity and Assurance – e-capability; e-security, privacy; digital confidence; empowered consumers

with the aim of identifying the priority areas for government policy and programs beyond the build phase of the NBN.

ATUG's focus will be on policies and programs that need to be in place to support the accelerated development of Australia's Digital Economy.

An extract from the Government's December 2008 Digital Economy Future Directions Consultation paper is attached for reference.

### **Significant Dates**

- April – NBN Announcement
- May – ATUG Digital Economy Forum #1
- July – ATUG Digital Economy Forum #2
- Mid 2009 – Digital Economy Directions Paper
- September – ATUG Digital Economy Forum #3
- November – ATUG Report on Digital Economy Forums
- January/February 2010 – ATUG Focus Policies 2010

## **Digital Economy Future Directions Consultation Paper**

[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/communications\\_for\\_business/Digital\\_Economy\\_Development/digital\\_economy](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/communications_for_business/Digital_Economy_Development/digital_economy)

***[Note: This is a summary and extracts from the Consultation Paper. ATUG encourages you to refer to the complete Consultation Paper for a full discussion of the issues. The links with ATUG Forums in identified for each consultation topic]***

The 'digital economy' refers to the global network of economic and social activities enabled by ICTs, particularly the internet. It includes commercial transactions, personal dialogue, information, entertainment and delivery of services. The term is often used interchangeably with 'internet economy' and 'information society'

This consultation paper will inform that part of the *Future Directions* paper that outlines the roadmap for Government and industry to maximise Australia's online participation.

### **Consultation Topics**

#### **Open access to Public Sector Information (ATUG Forum #2)**

The Australian Government publishes and makes freely available a considerable amount of information to the public through various policies including Government copyright and freedom of information. However, the internet and Web 2.0 technologies are increasing the potential for economic and socially-valuable use and reuse of information created by governments, and there is a growing volume of support for the notion that the Australian Government should provide access to public sector information (PSI) on terms that clearly permit the use and re-use of that information. PSI includes Government produced data (such as Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and geospatial data) and copyright protected materials (such as reports and other documentation). It can also include materials that result from publicly-funded cultural, educational and scientific activities.

#### **Questions for industry and other stakeholders**

What categories of Public Sector Information (PSI) are most useful to industry and other stakeholders to enable innovation and promote the digital economy?

What are priority issues that will facilitate the use of PSI?

If PSI is made open access, what are the best formats to enable and promote use and reuse?

If PSI is made open access, what licensing terms would best facilitate and promote its use and reuse?

Should licensing terms distinguish between commercial uses and non-commercial uses and reuses?

Are there other examples of innovative, online uses of PSI?

Is there any additional economic modelling or other evidence to show the benefit to Australia from open access of PSI?

### **Digital Confidence (ATUG Forum #3)**

To enable Australian companies and consumers alike to play a strong role in the next wave of growth, it is important that government and industry collaborate to ensure that people are as confident to interact and engage via the internet as they are offline. Businesses that have digital confidence will expand their online service offerings and consumers with digital confidence will increasingly find information online, communicate and interact via the internet and shop online.

#### **Questions for industry and other stakeholders**

What more can industry and other stakeholders do to address concerns about consumer privacy and online safety?

What more can be done to increase trust and confidence in online transactions?

What is needed to address the SME concerns identified above?

Are there possible barriers preventing a strong online retail experience in Australia? What can industry and other stakeholders do to address these?

What is the experience of business-to-business e-commerce in Australian supply chains? Are companies (large and small) saving money because they are now making electronic transactions? What are the barriers to take-up? Are international companies benefiting from e-commerce transactions with consumers and with other businesses?

What evidence shows the possible barriers preventing greater online content offerings? What can be done to address these?

### **Developing Australia's knowledge and skills base (ATUG Forum #2)**

To enable full participation in the digital economy, it is essential that Australians have the appropriate digital and media literacy skills to access and effectively use digital media and communications. In particular, Australian businesses must have the necessary e-business skills. Expanding Australia's ICT skills base by promoting technology-focused training at the vocational and tertiary levels is important to ensure Australian businesses are able to develop the websites, applications and other products that are vital for their participation in the digital economy.

What can industry and other stakeholders do to assist the Government's existing efforts to develop the digital and media literacy skills of Australians?

Would specific offline measures to inform business and local industry groups about online offerings assist in developing e-business?

How can industry assist in promoting the attractiveness of ICT related degrees?

What core set of digital economy skills can be incorporated into non ICT-related degrees?

Will industry work with Government through the Productivity Places Program and Innovation and Business Skills Australia to improve the curriculum of current training courses?

How can we better match supply and demand for skilled ICT workers?

What measures did industry find successful in boosting staff, ICT and e-business skills?

### **Ensuring Australia's regulatory framework enables the digital economy (ATUG Forum #1)**

To allow Australian digital economy companies to flourish and attract the investment and knowledge transfer that overseas technology and online businesses can bring to Australia by establishing a local presence, it is important to consider those elements of our laws that are most critical for the digital economy and ensure that they are facilitative of online transactions and participation. As part of this, it is important to compare Australia's laws with international counterparts which have a healthy digital economy to ensure that Australia represents an attractive value proposition for digital economy companies. Clearly, relevant international treaties are also a key consideration.

#### **Questions for industry and other stakeholders**

Should the existing copyright safe harbour scheme for carriage service providers be broadened?

Does Australia's copyright law unreasonably inhibit the operation of basic and important internet services? If so, what are the nature of such problems and practical consequences? How should these be overcome?

Is there non-copyright legislation that is directly relevant to digital economy businesses that create uncertainty or barriers?

### **Digital economy and the environment (ATUG Forum #2)**

The digital economy will increasingly include the use of ICT to mitigate climate change. However, government, industry and other stakeholders can take greater measures to promote more environmentally responsible practices in relation to the design and implementation of infrastructure and devices that enable the digital economy. For example, the ICT sector is responsible for

approximately two per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup>, and ICT devices comprise an increasingly large proportion of the world's waste. The Government may also have a role to play in promoting greener ICT, as recognised by Sir Peter Gershon in the recent *Review of the Australian Government's Use of Information and Communication Technology*.

#### **Questions for industry and other stakeholders**

What, steps, if any, should Government take to promote the greater adoption of teleworking and videoconferencing? What impact do Operational Health and Safety laws have on the uptake of teleworking and videoconferencing in your industry?

The Government has already committed to review and propose regulation for e-waste and has taken steps to promote smart technology to manage scarce resources. Are there additional steps Government can take on these issues? What additional steps can industry take in relation to these issues?

#### **Measuring the digital economy and its impacts (ATUG Forum #2)**

Future policy issues are arguably less about the availability of access to high speed broadband internet and more about the innovative use associated with transformation and automation of existing practices through, for example, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, mobile solutions and new business models. In addition, the indicators suggest that there is considerable scope for additional investment in e-business solutions by Australian business. However, the available indicators provide limited detail on sector-level performance, and particularly in comparison to our international competitors. Yet, without such indicators, it will be difficult to identify industries or sectors that are lagging and to which appropriate policy responses, if any, could be directed.

Recently, industry has released useful research that provides assistance with tracking contributors to the digital economy. Examples include the Australian Industry Group's recent [High Speed to Broadband: Measuring industry demand for a world class service](#), the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association's *Digital Services Index 2008* and the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia's *Interactive Australia 2009* report.

#### **Questions for industry and other stakeholders**

What, if any, additional datasets should government collect to improve the benchmarking of Australia's digital economy?

What do you consider are the key digital economy indicators?

What additional industry sources of data exist which provide background on digital economy metrics?

What additional research and data work could industry or data collection organisations undertake to assist in measuring Australia's digital economy?

Do you have views on the adequacy of the existing data sets or suggestions as to how they might be improved?