bandwidth
implementation plan
2004-05

bandwidth action plan

Context

The July 2003 meeting of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed the *National Bandwidth Action Plan – Learning in an online world 2003-06* as the basis for the development of the *National Implementation Plan*.

The *National Implementation Plan 2004-05* provides the detail critical to realising the intent of the action plan, including identification of opportunities for collaborative work with the other education sectors and Commonwealth agencies.

The plan is responsive to national and jurisdictional strategic policy initiatives and to changing market conditions. It recognises that increased connectivity and improved infrastructure are critical to maximising educational opportunities afforded by digital content and services.

Evaluation of this plan, identification of emerging needs and opportunities, and review of policy imperatives will inform the development of the *National Implementation Plan 2005-06*.

Australian Government Initiatives

The National Broadband Strategy announced in March 2004 addresses the recommendation of the Broadband Advisory Group that the Australian Government adopts a coordinated approach to broadband in a national strategy. It provides funding for the:

- National Broadband Strategy Implementation Group (NBSIG)
- Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund (CCIF)
- Demand Aggregation Broker Program
- Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme (HiBIS).

A key element of the strategy is the appointment of the National Broadband Advisor for Education who will work closely with the school sector.

The *National Implementation Plan 2004-05* leverages opportunities that flow to the school education sector from the National Broadband Strategy.

learning in an ONLINE world

MCEETYA
Australia - New Zealand

Action 1

Adopt a co-ordinated, co-operative approach based around a portfolio of actions aimed at a long term sustainable result

The ICT in Schools Taskforce will develop strategic school sector positions on bandwidth needs and content delivery to be taken forward to Ministers and national working groups.

This work will be informed by the National Bandwidth Strategy, AICTEC Initiatives, input from jurisdiction Chief Information Officers and from the outputs of projects undertaken under Action 3.

Action 2

Establish appropriate governance arrangements

Governance for the Bandwidth Implementation Plan exists at two levels:

- the Bandwidth Implementation Plan Steering Committee including nominated members of the Taskforce and the National Broadband Advisor for Education.

- Taskforce representatives on the AICTEC Bandwidth Sub-Committee.

Action 3

Invest in better understanding of current and future needs

The Taskforce has established and is maintaining a collection of nationally comparable data on the provision of bandwidth to government schools. Discussions are investigating opportunities for the inclusion of data for catholic and independent schools.

Systems and schools need to understand the bandwidth required to effectively deliver pedagogical and administrative functions 2006 -2010. Requirements will vary across jurisdictions and between schools, depending on priorities. A consultancy will develop a scaleable and flexible modelling tool that is underpinned by clearly articulated assumptions and accommodates jurisdiction and school priorities.

Connectivity is critical to the effective use of available bandwidth. Investigating issues related to wireless and wireless/cable solutions is a priority.

Action 4

Help schools become informed users

The outcomes of the consultancies to progress Action 3 will inform the development of succinct practical guides that will be made available to jurisdictions for web distribution to schools.

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Action 5

Establish a small national unit with analysis, negotiation, facilitation and technical capability under the direction of a governance body.

Subsequent to MCEETYA endorsement of the *National Bandwidth Action Plan* a Broadband Advisor for Education has been appointed as an integral component of the National Broadband Strategy. The advisor, in consultation with the Bandwidth Implementation Plan Steering Committee, will progress this action through work with:

- jurisdictions, suppliers and intermediaries to identify opportunities for improved bandwidth arrangements and to improve negotiating capacity

- VET and Higher Education sectors to identify opportunities for cooperative action, and

- DCITA on Coordinated Communications Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) submissions and Demand Aggregation Programs.

Actions 6 and 7

Adopt a sector-wide approach to content transaction.

Strengthen competition through targeted initiatives, including direct investment.

The priority for 2004-05 is increasing bandwidth and developing the infrastructure required to deliver content to schools. Content transaction and competition will be priorities 2005-06, with initial discussions in 2004.

The Steering Committee will work with AARNET in 2004-05 to explore opportunities to negotiate school sector agreements that facilitate the use of the national cabling funded by all jurisdictions. Jurisdictions implementing National Communication Fund (NCF) and CIF projects will work with the Broadband Adviser to leverage opportunities arising from the AREN initiative.

Action 8

Develop strategies to better exploit the opportunities provided by improved bandwidth including moving beyond an "add-on" culture in the use of ICT and actively identifying and redirecting the benefits in terms of resource substitution.

Programs to provide adequate bandwidth, infrastructure and digital content and to build teacher capability are current priorities. Time is required to fully utilise and embed the opportunities articulated in *Learning in an online world 2003-06* and those being realised through the Le@rning Federation Initiative before addressing this action.

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School Provision

Investment in bandwidth provision is a priority for all jurisdictions. There has been a significant increase in the level of bandwidth available to both government and non-government schools between 2002 and 2003, with an increasing number receiving broadband services.

A diverse range of activities undertaken by jurisdictions is enabling provision of higher levels of bandwidth to schools in 2004. New telecommunication funding and contracts have been negotiated by a number of jurisdictions.

Continued priority, innovative solutions and cross-sector cooperation is required for the school sector to attain broadband connectivity to schools and to rural and remote students who study from home.

Modelling Bandwidth Needs

Articulation of bandwidth requirements to support pedagogical and administrative functions in 2006 is essential for strategic planning by jurisdictions. A flexible, scaleable modelling tool will be a key outcome of the *National Implementation Plan 2004-05*.

Emerging Priority

Establishing connectivity within schools and between schools is a current priority for a number of jurisdictions. Schools that do not have local area networks to all computers limit the uses that the non-networked computers can be employed for. This includes:

- internet access

- applications residing on school servers

- jurisdiction wide applications

Jurisdictions are considering wireless as a component of school-based infrastructure. They are also considering wireless solutions as a means to:

- extend pedagogical options and to provide student and teacher access in a range of environments

- network desktops, laptops and other mobile computing devices.

A national investigation, examining trends, options and cost-effectiveness is a priority action for 2004-05.