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Date: 01-Jul-2008

Ref: CBD-360-DBCDE

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

SUBMISSION FOR BROADBAND SOLUTION FOR REMOTE AREAS

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please find enclosed a brief submission by the Community Technology Centre Association that addresses a significant issue with the provision of Broadband in Remote Areas.

Our submission provides a cost effective solution to provide broadband to a large proportion of Australian's living in remote area. Our proposal consists of the provision and access to ICT for individuals and groups that are financially disadvantaged or don't have the means to access broadband or internet connections or the supporting technology.

In addition to the brief submission we have provided a capability statement of our network.

Yours sincerely

Mark Ziemer
Government Business Development Manager
Community Technology Centre Association



BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

BROADBAND SOLUTION FOR REMOTE AREAS

**SUBMISSION BY THE NSW COMMUNITY
TECHNOLOGY CENTRE ASSOCIATION**

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

SUBMISSION SUMMARY

The Community Technology Centre Association (CTCA) has identified a niche need for rural and remote communities that require subsidised access to ICT and high speed broadband. Our proposal consists of the provision and access to ICT for individuals and groups that are financially disadvantaged or don't have the means to access broadband or internet connections or the supporting technology.

This access will be provided through the 80 Community Technology Centres located through-out remote and regional NSW. The CTCA have identified that a large number of people residing in remote and regional Australia, that because of their financial status or for other reasons can not access even elementary ICT. The CTCA proposes to provide free or subsidised access for these people.

For many remote communities, homesteads and rural businesses, satellite or dial-up internet is the only technologically or economically viable option for private connections. However the severe limitations of these technologies for educational, medical, telemetry or communication applications can be offset by publicly accessible broadband available in the nearest town. There is a CTC within one hour's travel from almost anywhere in NSW. While it is not technologically feasible to provide home connections to very remote locations, this proposal would make any broadband-delivered service accessible.

With the cancellation of the WiMax contract, rural and regional communities will have a much longer wait for broadband, even to communities that will be served by fibre-to-the-node when it is fully rolled out. Community Technology Centres providing public access broadband in rural and regional centres will soften the wait.

In addition we would become an advisory service for people that need to determine what internet services are available and which is the most appropriate for their needs. We will also provide ICT training and support.

Some of the CTCs will need to be upgraded to provide this service but a large portion already have acceptable broadband access but may require more modern PCs and supporting network equipment.

We would will also investigate the provision of Hotspots from some of our centres where there is a need identified.

APPLICANT/LEAD PROJECT PROPOSER

Title of proposal:	Bridging the Divide
Name of lead organisation:	Community Technology Centres Association Inc.
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PROPOSAL

The roll-out of this service will be provided through a network of existing community owned and operated Community Technology Centres. The Centres will be open to the public, and accessible to any for-profit or not-for-profit organisation, as well as the individuals and businesses seeking to access them, including those operating in the priority areas of health, education, government, community and emergency services.

The Centres are staffed by a mixture of paid staff, volunteers, and trainees. Staff will provide security and maintenance for infrastructure and equipment, technical support to users, and project administration for projects designed to demonstrate applications for the resources. They will ensure that in every community there will be access to ICT skills, technical support, training, and advocacy, along with physical infrastructure.

The CTC Association has network-wide working relationships and partnership relationships with state-level organisations delivering in the priority areas, and individual CTCs have partnerships with local organisations in their communities. The resources already developed by these organisations will be made available to an extended range of communities by creating the platforms necessary for their delivery in rural and regional NSW.

This will include:

- ◆ Public, private and community health providers (Mental Health Association of NSW, The Cancer Council, The Deaf Society, Arthritis NSW, Black Dog Institute, Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, GPs, allied health professionals),
- ◆ Secondary and tertiary education providers (Australian Technical Colleges, TAFE, community education providers, universities, private RTOs),
- ◆ Government (local, state and federal government services, community consultation providers, community education projects, public authorities and boards, natural resource management agencies, economic development and tourism agencies).
- ◆ Community (Family Support services, Parenting education, Domestic Violence support services, Rape Crisis services, Carers support services, Volunteer support).
- ◆ Emergency services (SES, Rural Fire Service, NSW Fire Brigades, Counter Terrorism Command, Australian Disasters Information Network, Australian Maritime Safety Authority, State Rescue Board, Emergency Management Australia, Australian Volunteer Coast Guards).

The centres will provide a broadband “safety net”, guaranteeing that no-one will be left behind in access to broadband provided information and services.

This will be achieved by providing free/subsidised public access to the new facilities being:

1. Providing public access to infrastructure capable of handling applications like videoconferencing, webconferencing, virtual classrooms, mapping and telemetry.
2. Liaising and negotiating with local, state and federal governments and agencies to achieve a whole-of-government approach in their dealings with Community Technology Centres, including
 - Identifying and brokering partnerships and amalgamations in overlapping services funded by different levels of government, such as RTCs, CTCs and GACs, and services that can usefully be co-located such as VICs, libraries, neighbourhood centres, tenants’ services etc.
 - Inclusion in equity and safety net access programs for families that cannot afford a computer, phone line, or home broadband.
3. Upgrading the capital equipment such as servers, network hubs and key PCs in Centres to ensure that they are able to fully utilise this type of application.
4. Training centre staff so that no rural, regional or remote community in NSW, is left without at least a nucleus of skilled people able to provide ICT technical

and client support, broadband advocacy, cyber safety education, and digital divide IT training to their community.

5. Developing and delivering projects to support broadband use such as cybersafety and digital literacy programs.
6. Supporting centres to develop and launch sustainable business operations using this technology, including community geographic domains, wireless ISPs, classrooms and technical support for e-learning, local podcasting and vidcasting media operations, internet content development and uploading, business and community directories, tourist services, economic development project delivery, community education project delivery, and employment services.

DETAILS OF CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

The Community Technology Centres network consists of 80 member organisations located in small towns throughout remote and regional NSW. All are not-for-profit community organisations, with very strong community engagement and local management committees. They are community owned, regionally focused and passionate about bringing services to their communities. Some are located in indigenous communities. They are managed under Incorporation or Section 355 Committees of local councils.

CTCs have common branding and trading name registration, policies and protocols, and pricing structures, and routinely conduct network wide business operations. Forty centres are currently quality suppliers, assessed against ISO9000 customer service standards with centres being continually accessed to provide quality suppliers.

The Community Technology Centres (CTC) Association Inc. is a member-based peak organisation for Community Technology Centres. It is the central point of contact for administration, marketing and technology support, and links government and commercial enterprise to centres in regional areas. As an incorporated body, the CTC Association acts as a project manager and co-coordinator for all the CTCs. CTC Association has successfully completed a number of major network projects.

This proposal will be coordinated by the CTC Association acting as project manager, ensuring there is one contact organisation for program implementation, quality control and reporting, and financial management and reporting, to guarantee quality service and delivery of this program.

The CTC Association is overseen by a Management Committee made up of representatives who are CTC managers, CTC management committee members, Community Executives, NSW Government and NSW Farmers who take pride in the strategic vision of aiding centres to grow regional communities using technology as a platform.

WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED

Each centre will have a local area network of publicly accessible PCs, connected to high speed broadband on a high bandwidth network, readily scaleable and able to be upgraded. Each centre will have some high specification PCs with the capacity to run applications such as webconferencing, virtual classrooms, and telemetry along with training and general access PCs. These computers will enable access to flexible, online and distance education, medical consulting, and media rich broadband resources.

There will be computers with appropriate privacy to allow public access to health, business and government information.

Equipment will be maintained by full and part-time staff with IT technical support skills, creating a core of technical support and advocacy skills available in CTC towns.

Centres will be sources of readily accessible, local information about availability of broadband services and connection types and options, helping to create informed consumers of broadband.

Centres and will provide digital literacy programs to target groups such as seniors, unemployed, disabled, isolated communities who would otherwise be unable to access the skills to take advantage of broadband resources.

There will be staff with skills and capacity to partner with remote health, education, and community service providers in project delivery using broadband technologies such as video conferencing, webcasting and podcasting, short courses and professional development programs. Centre staff will be able to facilitate access by local communities to their resources and programs.

Centres will hold the licenses to, and will build and maintain Community Geographic domain websites, with community directories, business directories, arts and culture directories, service directories, tourist information, transport information, emergency information, community education campaigns, events calendar, and local news including sports results. This will aid sustainability and enable rural and regional

communities to be producers of new media in their local communities, as well as consumers.

In the event of any kind of emergency, the centre will be able to be instantly transformed into a networked multi-agency emergency management centre.