



Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Position Statement

RATIONALE

Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDA-NR) is a non-profit community-based and regionally focused organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy.

RDA-NR recognises that:

- businesses, particularly ‘knowledge-based’ businesses, will only grow or be attracted to the Northern Rivers if they have access to up-to-date ICT infrastructure and skilled people;
- major concerns for regional businesses¹ include mobile phone reception/quality, telecommunications services and telecommunications costs; and
- Northern Rivers businesses often rely on ICT suppliers who are outside their communities and incur higher ICT costs than equivalent businesses located in urban centres.

Research has identified that *“To varying degrees for different members of the communities studied, online services are steadily assuming greater importance. Access to good communications infrastructure is critical for economic development plans in which e-commerce, home-based business, or telecommuting are central. Good access to reliable communications and new technologies is a selling point to attract people to rural communities ...”*²

PRINCIPLES

RDA-NR recognises that ICT infrastructure is a key driver of regional economic growth because it enables both the development and intensification of a networked economy. The following position statement reflects the Board’s position that Northern Rivers businesses and industry must have access to a full range of affordable ICT services if they are to remain competitive and prosper in today’s expanded economic environment. RDA-NR:

- advocates for better and more affordable ICT access within the Northern Rivers;
- encourages the establishment of strong relationships with ICT service providers to better understand ICT service availability and infrastructure issues within the Northern Rivers;
- supports training initiatives to help build the ICT skill base within the Northern Rivers; and
- recognises the importance of businesses in the region who are ICT champions and are willing to showcase the benefits of using ICT.

¹ Based on the business survey reported in ACCI Review, (October 2001), *What Regional Business Needs: Results of Survey of Regionally-based Firms*, Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Barton, ACT

² Goggin, G. (2003), *Rural Communities Online: Networking to link Consumers to Providers*, Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, University of Queensland, Melbourne, p 1. (Report prepared for Telstra’s Consumer Consultative Council on the findings of three representative but diverse small regional areas, one of which was Mullumbimby)

DATE OF ADOPTION

Version 1 adopted by Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers 11 December 2009

DATE OF REVIEW

December 2012