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INTERNET ACCESS BOOST IN NORTHERN GRAMPIANS COMMUNITY

The State Government is providing funding to help Victorians in the Northern Grampians area access the Internet as part of the \$3.5 million Public Internet Access Program, the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Marsha Thomson, announced today.

Ms Thomson said the Northern Grampians Shire had been awarded a \$7,500 grant to assist in providing public Internet access for the local community by upgrading existing computer equipment and assisting with ongoing Internet connection costs.

“The Public Internet Access Program aims to ensure that community-based public Internet access continues to be provided to disadvantaged Victorians that would not otherwise have such access,” Ms Thomson said.

“This project will help provide free internet access to the community at four sites; the Glenorchy Post Office, Marnoo Old General Store, Great Western Garage and Navarre Co-operative Store.

“By providing access to the Internet for its residents of the Northern Grampians Shire, the Bracks Government is ensuring that people who are geographically isolated have the opportunity to become connected with the rest of the world.”

Northern Grampians Shire Chief Executive Gina Lyons said the council had a strong history of providing the local community with Internet access.

“In 2002, the Shire was successful in obtaining funding under the State Government’s e-Gaps program, which enabled us to provide more than 3,220 internet hours at venues across the Shire,” Ms Lyons said.

“From secondary school students studying out-of-hours to senior citizens researching their family tree, the e-Gaps program has been well utilised and we welcome this funding to allow us to continue providing public Internet access.”

The Public Internet Access Program is part of the State Government’s *Connecting Communities: the second wave* policy which aims to reduce barriers to Internet uptake in Victoria.

“The Bracks Government is working to make sure every Victorian regardless of age, gender, ability, location or level of income is able to access the benefits the Internet offers,” Ms Thomson said.

The Northern Grampians Shire was one of 67 community groups to receive a grant in the first round of funding from the program.

Over the next four years more than \$3.5 million has been committed to fund projects as part of the Public Internet Access Program.