



The Place To Be

Media release

Minister for Information and Communication Technology

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INTERNET ACCESS BOOST FOR ECHUCA COMMUNITIES

Murray Human Services in Echuca will receive \$5,000 to continue providing public internet access, as part of a \$3.5 million funding boost from the Bracks Government, the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Marsha Thomson, announced today.

“This is one of 22 community organisations across the state to be funded under the latest round of the Public Internet Access Program (PIAP), set-up to help provide Victorians with free or affordable internet access,” Ms Thomson said.

“The grants will help pay for internet connections or purchase new computer equipment, so community groups can keep providing their valuable services.”

Murray Human Services will be using its grant to help people with a disability living in a rural area get online to can gain information and communicate via the internet.

“PIAP is designed to bring all the benefits of the web to a diverse range of people currently under-represented among internet users. These include senior Victorians; recent migrants; unemployed people, including disadvantaged youth; and people with a disability,” Ms Thomson said.

“Through this initiative the Bracks Government will be funding up to half a million hours of free or affordable internet access for Victorians over the next four years.”

PIAP is part of the Bracks Government’s policy *Connecting Communities: the second wave*, released in December 2004. It includes an additional \$9 million over four years to support initiatives aimed at reducing the remaining barriers to internet uptake in the Victorian community.

Since 2001, the Victorian Government’s *Connecting Communities* policy has worked successfully towards bridging the digital divide.

“More than 50 per cent of Victorians in regional areas are now using the internet compared with 32 per cent in 1999,” Ms Thomson said.

“The Bracks Government is also honouring its commitment to create *A Fairer Victoria*.

“We are committed to working with local governments, communities and businesses to help remove barriers to opportunity, and provide access and choice for all Victorians.”

For more information, contact VICNET toll free on 1800 629 835 or visit www.mmv.vic.gov.au/communities.