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ONLINE BOOST FOR VICTORIA'S DISABLED MOTORISTS

A program to establish 16 online community groups, which will provide information and assistance on transport issues for disabled motorists, was launched today by the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Marsha Thomson.

The Disabled Motorists' Association, based in Coburg, was awarded a \$30,000 grant under the Victorian Government's *My Connected Community* program to establish virtual meeting places where community groups can interact online.

"The Disabled Motorists' Association Regional Development Program will establish 16 Disability Access Groups, including 10 across regional Victoria," Ms Thomson said.

"These online groups will enable the exchange of information on motoring and transport issues, provide communications, representation and networking, and resources to help reduce isolation.

"Meeting online will also enable more members to attend and share ideas.

"The program will target people with a disability, including seniors and people from non-English speaking backgrounds."

The online groups will be established in Cobram, Shepparton, Kyabram, Echuca, Swan Hill/Cohuna, Mildura, Geelong, Warrnambool, Traralgon, Sale, Bairnsdale, Mornington, Dandenong, Epping, Broadmeadows and Werribee.

Ms Thomson said the *My Connected Community* program aimed to reduce barriers to Internet use in Victoria by assisting people who have not yet been able to gain access to the Web or the skills to use it effectively.

"Fifty-seven per cent of adult Victorians now use the Internet, and the number of households with Internet access has more than doubled to 54 percent since 1999," Ms Thomson said.

"In fact, 50 percent of people living in regional Victoria are using the Internet compared with 32 per cent in 1999.

"The Bracks Government is committed to creating A Fairer Victoria by working with local governments, communities and businesses to help remove barriers to opportunity, and provide access and choice for all Victorians.

"Since 2001, the Bracks Government has committed more than \$5 million to the *My Connected Community* program. More than 3,000 online groups have been established and there are now more than 42,000 registered users."

Application forms for the latest round of *My Connected Community* grants, which close at 22 September, are available by calling the My Connected Community Secretariat at VICNET on 1800 629 835.