

## **Issue**

Telstra has indicated its intent to cease providing ISDN (Integrated Service Digital Network) internet plans as of 31 December 2008. The issue of broadband internet services can be highly confusing to customers, with many different Internet Service Providers (ISP's) offering a range of different plans, at a range of different prices, over various contract lengths. To add to the confusion, there is also the issue of the availability of subsidies to reduce the cost of internet plans to those who do not have access to a metro-comparable broadband service and how to determine whether you are eligible for these subsidies. This briefing note aims to shed some light on this area and provide members with a clear path of action to assist you to make an educated choice regarding the ISP and plan that will most suit your requirements.

## **Broadband Assistance**

The Association recommends that before signing up to a new internet contract (even if it is with your current provider) you seek information regarding the ISP's in your area and the plans that they are offering.

- The reason for this is that new ISP's are continually initiating new services throughout all regions of NSW and what may have been the best ISP and plan for you in the past may no longer be the best value now.
- The best tool for determining which ISP's provide metro-comparable internet services in your area is the **Broadband Service Locator** (BSL) tool on the Federal Government's Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy website <http://bcoms.dcita.gov.au/BSL/Welcome.do>.
  - By using the BSL tool you can see contact details of commercial providers of metro-comparable broadband services in your area.
  - The BSL will also start you on your way to getting a service from a registered Australian Broadband Guarantee provider (see below) if a commercial provider is unable to help.
- Members can also receive help over the phone by calling the Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy on **1800 883 488\*** (during business hours Monday-Friday).

## **Australian Broadband Guarantee**

The Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) commenced 2 April 2007 and provides up to \$2 500 per eligible premises to subsidise the cost of a broadband internet connection. If you do not have a metro-comparable broadband service available to you, then you are potentially eligible for a subsidised service under the ABG.

- A metro-comparable broadband service can be defined as a service offering at least:
  - 512/128 kb per second download/upload speed
  - 1GB per month data allowance, regardless of time of use
  - A total cost of \$2 500 over three years including any equipment or installation charges
- To gain information about your eligibility for a subsidy under the ABG, members should again use the BSL (<http://bcoms.dcita.gov.au/BSL/Welcome.do>) or contact the Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy on- **1800 883 488\*** (during business hours Monday-Friday).

## **Concerns Regarding Existing Services**

If you have any concerns regarding the quality and cost of your existing broadband internet service, even if this service was provided under the Higher Bandwidth Incentive Scheme (HIBIS) you should contact the Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy on- **1800 883 488\***

*\*Due to high demand this number can sometimes go through to message bank, keep trying there are approximately 15 staff on hand, your call will be answered.*