BACKGROUND:-

In 2003 the Social Impact Consultative Panel commissioned the Hunter Valley Research Foundation to produce a report on the social issues relating to the accessibility of internet and broadband. The outcome was the “Internet and Broadband Vision Workshop” background paper produced in March 2004 http://www.ncc.nsw.gov.au/council/public_exhibition/broadband.cfm which concluded that local infrastructure was sufficient to enable equitable access to internet and broadband. It determined that access was impeded due to access to training and support, the costs of hardware and software and a lack of awareness as to how Information and Communication Technology can be useful.

A workshop was held on 13 October 2004 to develop a range of strategic interventions that will enhance the capacity of the Newcastle community to harness the benefits of ICT.

The workshop involved the participation of stakeholders such as:- IT service providers, government representatives, learning providers, business representatives, community organisations and learning institutions. The aim of the forum was to increase information and communication technology across the Newcastle community and it also included a launch of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation’s paper (as referred to above). The key issues discussed were:- the vision for the Newcastle community, strategies and actions for Council and the community, other relevant issues and the possible impact that these issues may have for the community.

As an outcome of the forum the Strategic ICT Action Plan has been developed.

VISION:-

“Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will be used to facilitate connections to build a strong and sustainable community in Newcastle”.

AIMS:-

• To promote connectivity between individuals (via the internet and face-to-face dealings) and community groups based on common interests.
• To increase the number of people using the internet/broadband.
• To improve and increase infrastructure throughout the community.
• To build supportive regional partnerships.

KEY PRINCIPLE:-

ICT is a tool to deliver outcomes such as:-

• reducing isolation for individuals, communities and services by connecting them to other individuals and services (communities of interest);
• empowering individuals and services by increasing their knowledge base and increasing their skills and abilities;
• improving the competitiveness of local business; improving the consultation process between Government (including Council), services and individuals and allowing for a more democratic process, and;
• increasing flexibility for individuals as increased access to the internet/broadband can allow individuals to work from home, study from home, contact family, friends and like minded individuals and pursue hobbies and interests.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING</th>
<th>ACTION YEAR ONE</th>
<th>WHO</th>
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</table>
| To promote connectivity between individuals (via the internet/broadband and face-to-face dealings) and community groups based on common interests. | • Provide information on Council and community services and facilities in a more user-friendly format that encourages interaction.  
• Establish partnerships to assist communities and small businesses to set up their own websites. | • Identify website users and the information that they seek on the internet/broadband.  
• Review current websites that are effective and utilise those sections that are relevant (government and non-government).  
• Review the Hunter Export Centre (E-Trade) Project.  
• Review the NGO "Better Services Delivery Project".  
• Establish and provide links on Council's website to promote community groups that can assist groups to develop websites at minimal cost such as Octapod and Hunter Community Collective.  
• Investigate if there are useable small business website development portals that are cost effective. | NCC - Communities  
NCC - Communities  
H.E.D.C.  
NC OSS & regional forums.  
NCC - Communications  
Hunter Business Chamber  
University of Newcastle |

### Information and Communication Technology Strategic Plan

<table>
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| - To promote connectivity between individuals (via the internet/broadband and face-to-face dealings) and community groups based on common interests (cont'd) | - Identify existing communities and assist them to use ICT more effectively to meet their objectives. | - Work with NGO's to identify common interest groups of clients and assist them to access the internet/broadband.  
- Place Council's Community Directories on the website.  
- Provide a mechanism on the website to enable new groups to register and easily connect with other groups.  
- Provide a mechanism for groups to 'chat' with each other. | HCOSS  
NCC - Human Services  
NCC - Communications |
| - To increase the number of people using the internet/broadband. | - Recognise the different training needs of different groups and the delivery of an appropriate, innovative response.  
- Investigate the establishment of a 'floating volunteer mentor' model as a means of providing technical support to individuals.  
- Increase the availability of ICT access in libraries. | - Libraries to continue to offer and encourage programs that engage people to use IT e.g. genealogy.  
- Identify groups that would benefit from training on using the Council website to talk to each other.  
- Approach Hunter Volunteer Centre (and Hunter Community Collective) to determine what they are able to do in terms of meeting community groups' ICT support needs.  
- Wallsend Library will offer an out of hours service when the new library is opened. | NCC - Libraries  
NCC Communications/Libraries  
NCC/Social Planning  
Libraries |
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<tr>
<td>To increase the number of people using the internet (cont'd)</td>
<td>• Encourage the provision of ICT facilities in key community services and facilities to be considered as part of the development application process.</td>
<td>• Review/Update the SIA policy for DAs.</td>
<td>NCC</td>
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<td>• Encourage facilities with internet resources to provide broader community access out of hours.</td>
<td>• Increasing awareness of centres where ICT can be accessed in the general community (through means other than internet/broadband) for e.g. flyers at neighbourhood centres, rate notices, shopping centres and Council newsletters of when and where out of hours access is provided.</td>
<td>HCOSS/NCC</td>
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<td>• Examine ways in which key stakeholders can demystify jargon such as &quot;broadband&quot; and &quot;ICT&quot;.</td>
<td>• Investigate the viability of approaching services such as Homework Centre, PCYC and Neighbourhood Centres to provide access to computers out of hours.</td>
<td>HCOSS</td>
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<td>• Provide ongoing identification and support of peak regional bodies to address regional and infrastructure needs.</td>
<td>• Development of a ready reckoner/glossary of terms.</td>
<td>NCC - Communications</td>
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<td>• Communicate identified user infrastructure needs to peak regional bodies for infrastructure and action.</td>
<td>• Commitment to the use of plain language by all stakeholders.</td>
<td>All working Group and stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To improve and increase infrastructure throughout the community.</td>
<td>• Provide ongoing identification and support of peak regional bodies to address regional and infrastructure needs.</td>
<td>• Ongoing participation of NCC and the representatives of Working Group with Hunter Economic Development Board and Hunter Business Chamber to facilitate information exchange.</td>
<td>Working Group</td>
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KEY PLAYERS:-

- Government bodies: Newcastle City Council, Centrelink, Premier’s Department, Department of Community Services, State and Regional Development, Hunter Economic Development Corporation.
- Hunter Valley Research Foundation
- Educational institutions – University, TAFE, WEA, Department of Education and Training, schools and NSW International VET Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning.
- Community centres/services – Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre, Elermore Vale Community Centre, Warabrook Community Centre, Computerpals.
- Local service providers – Ipera, Kooee, Telstra, IDL.