

Media release

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Government offers education and support to help Aussies get online

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) has welcomed today's announcement by the Federal Government that it will set up "Digital Hubs" to provide people with community-based computer and internet training as part of its National Digital Economy Strategy.

ACCAN says the Strategy will offer people who are not familiar with the technology a chance to get internet-literate and will begin to bridge the "digital divide" that is creating a new class of have and have nots.

According to 2009 ABS figures 28% of Australian households have no internet access and 22% don't have access to a computer.

"Many people take for granted that they know how to use a computer to surf the internet, pay their bills online, send emails to family and friends, bank, and shop online for the best prices," said ACCAN Chief Executive Teresa Corbin.

"But there are plenty of people out there who have never used a computer or had any exposure to the internet and these people are being left behind – financially and socially. The "Digital Hubs" announced today by the Government will begin to bridge that digital divide."

ACCAN says the training will be offered through a mix of group sessions and one-on-one tutorials to enable participants to engage in basic online activities such as setting up an email account; conducting internet searches; participating in e-commerce and online shopping; accessing government services; and connecting with family and friends online.

"We hope that this initiative, which will launch in 40 communities that are early beneficiaries of the NBN, will be extended to more communities in the future as the rollout continues around the country," said Corbin.

"If you're reading this story online or are under the age of 35 then you might not often think about how different your life would be without computer skills and the ability to search, transact and communicate online, but there are whole segments of our community who don't know how."

"ACCAN is pleased these issues of inequality and social inclusion are being addressed by offering practical solutions for people who need help accessing the online world."

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About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.