

What are the current patterns of use by Victorian Non-English speaking communities of the Internet?

What do they believe should be done in order to ensure their ongoing participation with the Internet?

Findings from community consultations conducted during June and July 2002.

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this project was to gain greater insight into the impact the Internet and online technologies have brought about for the high proportion of Victorians who speak a language other than English (21%).¹ A partnership between the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and VICNET was formed to investigate how members of non-English speaking communities use the Internet and what they believe should be done to ensure greater participation.

Eight community consultations were conducted across Victoria with representation from over 70 groups and organisations including multicultural service providers, local government, ethnic community groups, libraries, training organisations, peak bodies, and schools. A background paper was distributed to participants to assist in focusing the discussions.

The overall findings indicate that while many people from NESB communities are using the Internet, there are significant gaps in up-take depending on age, level of English language skills, geographic location, income and availability of appropriate training and public access.

There continues to be a lack of awareness of the relevance and benefit of using the Internet, particularly for older people. Leadership within communities was commonly identified as a means of addressing this. There is also limited awareness in the community by those not using the Internet of how to gain entry-level skills and access.

With the exception of many libraries, existing public access was generally identified as not appropriate for NESB communities, either due to cost, language support, availability after hours, and lack of assistance for those with limited skills.

People were not likely to take part in formal training unless it was presented incorporating their linguistic and cultural needs. Some metropolitan libraries and community organisations have been providing training in specific languages, or have been delivering tailored training to multicultural groups. However, there is often a much higher demand than what is available. In regional areas there are much fewer training options. The Shepparton area had more training opportunities than the other regional areas, however given the number of different ethnic communities in the area; the demand far outweighed what was available.

There was limited awareness of government web-sites with translated material. Only a few were identified and considered useful, and for many there were concerns about the difficulty in finding translated material, the limit of what was translated, and some language related technical problems. Other concerns were the cost transferal to community organisations where some printed material was limited to the web, and the preference by older people for face to face transactions with government rather than online.

Recommendations have been made for specific funding targeted to the non-English speaking population to provide more basic computer and Internet training in appropriate forms to accommodate language and cultural requirements. A need has

¹ Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Census 2001

also been identified for development of skills for trainers, web design in LOTE, and technical language support at a META level.

The diversity of communities and the sporadic nature of current training and access options suggests that future funding needs to be implemented in consultation with communities, and should also include coordination and promotion of services in geographical areas, particularly in regional Victoria.

The consultations drew attention to existing resources in the community that would be enhanced by forming partnerships, either at statewide level for development of training and technical resources, or by local government area for specific service delivery.

A key aim of this project was to find out what type of information could be gained by going out to communities and asking questions. This project was limited due to time and scope, and some topics identified for discussion were not addressed in sufficient detail. What this report does show is that ethnic community members are not experiencing and interacting with the Internet at the same levels as the general population. Further and more insightful analysis needs to be undertaken in this area, this report only begins to understand the issue.

The project coordinators would like to thank all participants for their time and contribution to the consultations. The following organisations provided invaluable assistance as host venues for the meetings: City of Darebin, Geelong Migrant Resource Centre, Footscray Community Arts, Gippsland Migrant Resource Centre, Ethnic Communities Council of Shepparton and District, Sunraysia Ethnic Communities Council, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau, and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria.

Recommendations

1. An in depth statewide study be conducted on the current patterns of usage, programs available and barriers to the Internet to ensure a greater understanding of the situation and in order to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. This study would incorporate recognition of the large number of ethnic communities, and languages spoken as well as the geographic spread of communities across the state.
2. An audit be conducted throughout Victoria to identify:
 - training curriculum in languages other than English
 - training curriculum for a multicultural setting
 - course availability in languages other than English
 - course availability in a multicultural setting
 - a register of bilingual and multilingual trainers
 - public access venues appropriate for NESB use
 - training aides
 - availability of lap-tops for off-site training
 - register of IT professionals available to provide appropriate support
3. Targeted funding be made available to provide resources in the area of training and access to members of ethnic communities, who are currently under-represented in the existing public access and Internet training services. Funding programs should allow for community development, flexibility in delivery, distinct publicity and promotion components including a mobile road-show, and consideration for geographic capacity.
4. Funding to be made available to develop and make widely available course materials for train the trainer, in a range of relevant languages including handouts for participants and training aids.
5. To explore the possibility of developing projects that incorporate an intergenerational component, including cultural maintenance and language acquisition.
6. Ethnic community leaders and organisations play a leadership role in promoting the benefits of the Internet to members of their community.
7. Government bodies and community organisations should develop comprehensive promotional campaigns with ethnic communities about the existence and benefits of their Internet sites. The multilingual components of these sites need to be easily accessible and appropriate language related technical standards should be implemented.

Rationale

The Internet has had a major impact on how individuals, organisations and government communicate. There has been significant involvement by all tiers of government in assisting Victorians in the uptake of the Internet. Introducing Internet into people's lives has involved enabling people to gain access to computers, and has generated a new and pressing need for many people to take part in formal training to gain the skills required to use the Internet.

The 2001 Census found that 21% of Victorians speak a language other than English at home. There are over 180 different languages and dialects spoken in the state.²

This project set out to explore what implications there are for people from non-English speaking backgrounds in gaining access to the necessary training, and equipment in order to make use of the Internet.

VICNET, a unit of the State Library of Victoria, project manages a number of state and federal government funded programs which provide training, access, infrastructure and online participation for Victorian communities. VICNET's involvement with people from non-English speaking backgrounds includes the development of the *Open Road* Project (an online multilingual browsing and training resource) and targeted funding of major Victorian government initiatives, primarily *Skills.net* and *My Connected Community*.

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the peak umbrella lobby, advocacy and information dissemination body for Victoria's ethnic communities, with current membership of 195 ethnic and multicultural organisations.

The ECCV established a Media and Arts Policy and Program Committee with membership from key individuals and organisations to provide expertise advice, assistance and advocacy to the Executive Committee of the Council. An organisational representative from VICNET is a member of this Committee.

This Committee has identified the Internet as an area where policy and programming to target members of ethnic communities must be established.

VICNET and ECCV formed a partnership to conduct this series of consultations with representatives of community organisations and local service providers to identify and document their experiences and knowledge on this issue with a view to informing government of the findings. This partnership recognised that by combining both organisations' networks and expertise, a greater understanding of how ethnic communities use the Internet can be gained.

² Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs web-site <http://www.voma.vic.gov.au> August 26,2002

Methodology

Venues for the eight meetings were selected to cover specific regions, and those invited to each meeting were generally located in the area.

Metropolitan Melbourne Locations:

Northern Suburbs: Preston
Western Suburbs: Footscray
South East Suburbs: Springvale
Inner Suburbs: Carlton

The regional locations selected were four with strong NESB infrastructure; Geelong, Gippsland (Morwell), Shepparton and Mildura.

Invitations were sent to ethnic community organisations, regional ethnic community councils, peak bodies, multicultural organisations, migrant resource centres, public libraries, skills.net providers to NESB communities, neighbourhood houses, community information bureaus, local government, schools, community health centres, and religious organisations.

Each consultation was of two hour duration, and was structured along the lines of the background paper that was sent to participants with their invitation. The project coordinators sought to address the questions raised in the background discussion paper during the consultations with community representatives, these included:

- Use of the Internet
- Training and skills development
- Public Access
- Government Services Online
- Technical Issues: Equipment and publishing
- Content
- Funding
- e-commerce

The discussions developed in different directions at each consultation and the breadth of the discussion was dictated by the experience of participants in attendance. For example consultations with a majority of participants from ethnic community representatives primarily discussed awareness, access, and usability. Consultations that had strong presence from service providers such as libraries and training organisations focused more on issues concerning training and service delivery.

The consultations were facilitated jointly by the project coordinators who allowed the participants to direct the conversations. At certain points however, specific questions were asked to address key themes such as public access, training, content and government information on the web.

Detailed transcripts for all consultations are available on request.

Key Findings

While each consultation revealed unique experiences, particularly in relation to the geographic locations, common themes were identified regarding obstacles to use of the Internet, and suggestions of ways to address these problems.

Awareness

Most community representatives recognised the importance for their community members to develop skills to access the Internet, but for many of these communities there was a lack of knowledge of how to begin. This was particularly true of older community members and those living in regional Victoria.

This identified lack of knowledge of the Internet was directly linked to limited awareness of practical uses the Internet would have for people. Some groups and individuals were adamant that they do not intend to use the Internet as they had no interest.

Leadership was often identified as important for communities to better understand the relevance of Internet, and to alleviate the fear that many people have of technology and using online services.

Awareness raising of the practical uses and relevance of the Internet was identified as integral with offering training and access. The use of a road-show using lap tops and bilingual workers was suggested to travel to ethnic community organisations, community events and public spaces to demonstrate useful applications of the Internet, as has been the case with the wider community across the state.

Patterns of use

Patterns of usage varied greatly between ethnic communities, location and generations within those communities. Generally it is believed that the uptake of Internet is directly related to the individual's English language skills, education level and knowledge of computers.

Many recently arrived migrants from a range of age groups may have had pre-arrival skills and therefore an immediate need to have access to the Internet to source settlement information, to stay in touch with family overseas and to establish links with their own cultural groups.

There were barriers for people on lower incomes including the cost of computers plus training and public access which in some areas was too high. Seasonal workers in regional areas were unlikely to take part in training due to the long hours they worked (there are many ethnic seasonal workers).

It was assumed that young people needed little or no assistance as the Internet is now firmly part of youth culture and it is taught in schools. In fact, in many cases, it was described as a young person's tool.

Participants at the consultations from schools identified the existence of a strong interest by parents who wished to understand the Internet because their children were using it, and that this is a potential area to explore.

People looked at the Internet as an information resource to receive information about their country of origin through online newspapers and streaming radio, and a means to be in contact with family. Some communities have developed unique patterns of usage and relied on only one or two features of the Internet. The Turkish community in the Shepparton district used the chat facility of the Internet while many members did not know how to use e-mail.

Reference was also made to groups who were actively using the Internet according to their specific needs, for example ethnic community broadcasters used the Internet as a tool to access news and information for their programs, many of these people were 55 years and over.

Many ethnic community members spent a significant proportion of their income on purchasing information in their language including newspapers and satellite radio and television. Information in language is considered of high value and people considered it important to receive this information and a necessary expense. Some people found television and newspapers preferable to information available online. In Mildura there is no longer broadcasting on community radio in some languages as the communities have chosen to pay for satellite radio instead. This raises the issue of how these communities will receive local content, and how government and service providers can engage in this issue.

Overall, communities had not established a strong local Internet presence, and there was little interest in finding local or Australian information. Older people would prefer to visit government offices than find information on the computer, even if it would take a much longer time. When the facilitators brought up the possibility of using the Internet for cultural identification and cultural maintenance, communities were interested in the idea as a long-term possibility.

Leadership was identified as a significant and potentially crucial issue, there was a strong belief by many participants, particularly in the metropolitan consultations that if community leaders actively and publicly embraced the Internet and encouraged their members to try it, participation rates would increase.

Older People

In a number of consultations, community leaders recognised that there was reluctance by older communities to engage in any way with the Internet. Trainers recounted stories of coaxing students to become interested in the Internet.

The majority of older people from ethnic communities do not use the computer, let alone the Internet, and many could be described as technophobes. Training courses had been modified to include content such as how to adjust a chair, how to use a mouse and how to turn on a computer. There was a need for training to be of greater length for older people. When they had problems with computers they do not know what was wrong or how to fix it. This frustration directly impacted on the individual's retention rate. One grandmother in Mildura who left school at 8 and does not read or write English has a computer with Internet access at home, and she uses it with her grandchildren when they come to visit.

Older people rely on their children and grandchildren to assist them whenever there is a need to use a computer and are very comfortable to rely on their family members for Internet information. They see the Internet as a tool for generations other than their own. However, people were often enthusiastic about the notion that

grandchildren could be involved in their grandparent's knowledge, understanding and development of skills for the Internet, and some kind of program to achieve this was suggested.

There was also feedback from trainers of the enthusiasm of older people when they had received training in an appropriate setting. A recent participant of the Internet training offered by the Hungarian community is aged 92. There was also description of the sense of achievement possessed by older people once they had successfully developed skills.

Use by Community Organisations

There was less emphasis in the discussions about how community organisations are using the Internet, and more research is required in this area.

Often those with computers in small community groups were relied upon to do all computer related work including accessing the Internet for information.

The migrant resource centres and larger organisations used the Internet as part of their business, and would sometimes play a role in providing translated information to community members, particularly from government web-sites. The list of participants in the appendix details the URLs for those with a web presence.

Some participating service providers intended to provide translated material on their web-sites, and were seeking information about how to best go about this. Discussion about technical issues for appropriate formats and useability with a range of operating systems identified a need for sound guidelines and skills development.

Public Access

The leading barrier to individuals maintaining and developing their skills on the Internet is public availability of Internet connected computers. Public libraries and community houses were described as possible places to go to maintain skills, but sometimes these places were not suitable due to a huge demand, and lack of assistance available.

Many places that offered Internet training did not provide on-going access to past students, and so many former students felt at a loss to know where else they could go to practice newly learnt skills. This was particularly true of participants whose courses were based at educational facilities. As well, there are not sufficient places that provide free access after hours. Where library computers were likely to have appropriate language support, other public access points were not likely to accommodate this, and the cost of printing at some libraries was prohibitive for people on low incomes (ranged from 10 cents to 50 cents per page).

It was emphasised that access points would be worthwhile at places where ethnic community members were familiar and comfortable. One possible solution identified is to provide access to schools after hours, or at ethnic community and religious centres. With these options it was recognised that additional funding would need to be provided to assist with supervision, particularly in schools, as well as technical support. The ability to use a public computer for basic word-processing in community

languages was often suggested. People were more likely to use computers for Internet if they are able to use them for other purposes.

Training

If people had limited English skills, they were not likely to participate in training courses offered in learning centres that only catered for the wider English speaking community.

The demand for Internet training either in a language other than English, or in English but catering to multicultural groups was repeatedly called for. Of the organisations already providing this kind of training, skills.net funded, libraries or otherwise, there was often reference to long waiting lists for their courses. Many of those organisations relied on volunteers to assist with the delivery of their training.

Flexibility in the delivery of training was identified as essential. There was no one way of delivering training, and there was constant reference to adapt training according to the trainees' language needs and existing skills. There was often discussion of the need for allowing time for basic computer training. There was feedback of the challenges involved in meeting these kind of trainees' needs where training was made possible through output based funding.

Importance was placed on the need for Internet training to be relevant to participants, and in the context of a tool that could be used to assist in practical ways. Examples included training developed to address the needs of new arrivals, specialist training for women about health issues, and courses for parents of school aged children.

Low literacy was often identified as an important issue and there was emphasis on keeping training materials simple and not text dependant. The need for trainers to have access to translated course material for participants was often raised. Training in small social groups where people felt comfortable was often described as desirable, whether it was for a particular ethnic group, age group, or gender specific. Some Internet training was incorporated into teaching English as a second language.

If people did not have their own means of transport, they were limited in the places they could attend training. In inner Melbourne there were examples of training programs delivered using portable lap-top computers that allowed training to take place in community premises. A Turkish school in the south eastern suburbs made their community bus available to take people to training. Timing of training was also significant, particularly if people worked long hours, or seasonally (such as fruit pickers) as described in the Shepparton and Mildura consultations.

The demand for suitable trainers was commonly expressed, and the multiple skill sets identified included training qualifications, IT skills, understanding of font related language issues, a second language (or third & fourth), or skills required to train a group of people with low levels of English.

A need for translated training materials to be developed and made freely available was consistently raised. One suggestion was for them to be downloadable from *The Open Road* web-site. Participants from training organisations and libraries identified a need for more trainers who could deliver courses in specific languages. There were suggestions that of a pool of lap-tops be made available for organisations to use for off-site training, as well as a video training resource that could be translated into different languages and used at home.

Some kind of coordination of existing services was put forward as a means of disseminating information about what training and access was available in an area. The formation of informal networks and partnerships within local areas to combine expertise and community knowledge in this area was suggested.

Libraries

There was notable attendance by libraries at seven out of the eight consultations, and in some meetings three libraries within the one region were represented.

Many libraries are significant providers of public access to ethnic communities. Several libraries in urban areas with large ethnic populations were conducting training specifically for ethnic communities, and some had formed partnerships with community organisations in their areas to deliver training. Boroondara Library Service, located in the eastern suburbs with a less prominent presence of ethnic communities, has been providing assistance to the local Sudanese community. This highlighted the diversity of language groups across the state and the challenge for libraries and other training and access providers to be able to meet the needs of the communities and individuals in their catchment areas.

Feed-back from some libraries in rural areas indicated that they did not have resources to provide support or formal training, let alone training in specific languages. Some of these libraries did not have reading material in any community languages and therefore did not have relationships with the ethnic communities in their area.

Some barriers to accessing Internet at Libraries included lack availability of staff for support, limited time for bookings, cost, competing demand for computers for word processing, and peak times booked out by students or travellers.

There were many anecdotes from library participants of people from ethnic communities who used the libraries regularly for access, and were able to use the service independently. For example members of Afghani and African communities in Springvale and Dandenong were using the library computers to access streaming radio, and in Shepparton members of the Arabic speaking community were regularly accessing newspapers. *The Open Road* was often identified as the means used to address font related language issues.

A common indication from library participants was recognition of the role libraries have to play in providing inclusive services for NESB communities. The need for greater resources, and wider community coordination to provide specialised training and support was often expressed.

Geographic Differences

There were obvious regional differences that suggested the need for a local approach to addressing training and access requirements. Factors influencing the uptake of Internet by ethnic communities in Mildura were completely different to those in Morwell, Geelong and Shepparton. The number of different ethnic groups, languages spoken, the presence of educational institutions in the region, employment opportunities, differences in prosperity, the relationships communities had with ethnic councils and migrant resource centres were all different. There were also clear differences between metropolitan areas. For example the training programs in the inner Melbourne housing estates such as those implemented by Infoxchange and

Yarra Melbourne Library Corporation were different to those delivered in schools and ethnic organisations in outer eastern suburbs. In Geelong, communities had more online presence than other regional areas as a result of the Migrant Resource Centre actively providing funds and resources to develop web-sites for ethnic organisations.

Technical Issues

Two types of technical issues were identified by participants; infrastructure related and font and language support issues. Infrastructure concerns included the cost of software and hardware upgrades required for computers and limited financial resources for community organisations to cover the high cost of IT support. Specific funding to address the cost of Internet related support, possibly by geographic area, was suggested. Some form of register of IT professionals who are available to provide appropriate support was suggested.

A technical concern for a Cambodian organisation delivering training was the need for a keyboard in Khmer, which was expensive and not readily available.

There was some suggestion that language issues are becoming less difficult to resolve as new versions of Microsoft Windows become available with support for more languages. However there was also feed-back that the benefit of this was limited by the cost involved for organisations and individuals in upgrading of this software.

Technical issues related to creating content were highlighted by an identified need for access to skills and technical support for the construction of web-sites in non-Latin languages such as Chinese and Punjabi which can be readable to end users with a range of web browsers and operating systems.

Technical standards were raised regarding the provision of multilingual information on web-sites. The use of HTML was preferable to images, which can take too long to open, or PDF files, which require the user's computer to have Acrobat Reader and are complicated for people with limited technical ability. There was also emphasis on the need for high quality translations, even if costly. There was an example of two local councils working to share knowledge and experience in developing multilingual web-sites. A need for further development, expertise and advice in this area was identified.

Local Web Content

Some ethnic communities have taken up the challenge on local content and have created their own sites. OzeUkes (<http://www.ozeukes.com>) a site developed for the Australian Ukrainian community was used to find out about cultural events within the community.

Some communities expressed interest in developing their own sites but did not have training opportunities or awareness of how to proceed.

When asked about sourcing Australian content, feedback was that people were more likely to visit overseas sites for news and information.

The project implemented by Infoxchange at the Atherton Gardens housing estate sought input from residents as to the kind of information they would like on the

estate's intranet. As well as suggestions for links to overseas newspapers, feedback included requests for links to web-sites providing local information about schools, and events in Melbourne.

It was believed that local providers or services with a web presence who cater to the needs of NESB communities have a role to play in making information available in languages other than English and promoting the existence and addresses of such sites to the community.

Government web-sites

Comments about translated material on government web-sites were varied. The Better Health Channel, Legal Online and the NSW Multicultural Health sites were identified as useful resources, however some concerns were raised about the reduced amount of translated information available, compared to that in English.

General criticism about government web-sites included a difficulty in locating translated material – in some cases there are no links on the front page. It was also raised that many government web-sites assume the user will know enough English in order to access the translated pages, and that the information translated was sometimes so limited, the purpose of having it online was questionable.

Community organisations providing services to ethnic communities were concerned about the transfer of cost where some translated information was now only available to be down-loaded from the web, and lengthy and colour documents were costly to print.

There was some concern about a transfer of face to face transactions by government services such as Centrelink to web based services. It was suggested there needed to be a balance of web-based information and somebody to speak to in person.

People participating from local government demonstrated a responsive link to specific communities in their geographical catchment areas, which differed to the nature of State and Federal Government web-sites. For example the web-site created by the City of Darebin <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au> with information provided in 12 languages is reflective of the large number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in the area, and recognition of their need for translated information about council services.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participating Organisations

Appendix B: Background paper

Appendix C: Invitation

Participating Organisations

Access Training & Employment Centre (ATEC)	http://www.vicnet.net.au/~atec
Adult Multicultural Education Services	http://www.ames.net.au
Austrian Community Morwell	
Bosnian Community Morwell	
Brimbank Library and Information Service (Sunshine Branch)	http://www.brim.vic.gov.au
Cambodian Association of Victoria	http://www.cambodianassociation.com.au
Carers Victoria	http://www.carersvic.org.au
CELAS	http://www.celas.org.au
Chinese Community Morwell	
City of Boroondara Library Service	http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au
City of Darebin	http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au
City of Greater Dandenong	http://www.greaterdandenong.com
City of Whittlesea	http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au
Community Information Whittlesea	http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ciwwhit
Coomoora Secondary College	
Darebin Libraries	http://www.darebin-libraries.vic.gov.au
Debney Park Secondary College	http://www.debney.vic.edu.au
Duke Street Community House	http://www.dukestcommunityhouse.org
Dutch Independent Senior Citizens of Aust	
English Language and Literacy Access	
Ethnic Communities Council of Shepparton & District	
Filipino-Australian Friends Association	
Goulburn Valley Turkish Islamic Cultural Society	
Geelong Ethnic Communities Council	http://www.geelongmrc.org
Geelong Regional Library Corporation	http://www.geelonglibraries.vic.gov.au
German Community Morwell	
Goulburn Valley Regional Library	
Greek Community of Gippsland	
Greek Senior Citizens Mildura	
Greek Welfare Centre	http://www.gwcv.net
Hoa Nghiem Temple	
Hobson's Bay Library	http://hobsons.vic.gov.au/libraries
Hume-Moonee Valley Regional Library Corporation	http://www.hmvrlc.vic.gov.au
Hungarian Community Centre	
Indo China Ethnic Chinese Association of Victoria Inc	http://www.iceca.org
Indonesian Society Morwell	
Infoxchange	http://www.infoxchange.net.au
Iraqi Community Shepparton	
Italian Circolo Penionati	
Italian Community Mildura	
Italian Festa Community Shepparton	
Keysborough Turkish Islamic & Cultural Centre	
Living & Learning In Lalor	
Maribyrnong Library Service	http://library.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au
Moreland City Council	http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au
Mt.Hira College	
Multicultural Web	http://www.multiculturalweb.org

National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council <http://www.nembc.org.au>
North Richmond Community Health Centre <http://www.nrhc.com.au>
Nthn Federation of Ethnic Senior Citizens Clubs
Philippine Community Morwell
Philippine House Foundation
Polish Association Morwell
Polish Community Council of Victoria <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~polishcc>
Punjabi Cultural Association Inc
Reservoir District Secondary College
San Marco in Lamis Social Club Carlton
Sunraysia Ethnic Communities Council
South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre <http://www.sermrc.dandenong.net>
Southvale Primary School
Springvale Heights Primary School
Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association
Sunraysia Ethnic Communities Council
Tongan Community Shepparton
Victorian School of Languages <http://www.vsl.vic.edu.au>
Women's Health in the North <http://www.whin.org.au>
Yarra Melbourne Regional Library Corp <http://www.ymrl.org.au>
Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries <http://www.yprl.vic.gov.au>
3ZZZ <http://www.3zzz.com.au>

Background discussion paper

What are the current patterns of usage by NESB communities of the Internet?

What do NESB Communities believe needs to be done in order to ensure ongoing participation with the Internet?

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to initiate discussion in a series of community consultations facilitated by the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria and VICNET.

These discussions will be held with ethnic organisations, migrant resource centres, local government, and other interested groups. The outcome is to compile a document that can assist in developing policy direction in this area.

Background

Since 1997 VICNET, a division of the State Library of Victoria, have been involved in the delivery of a number of Internet related services to Victorian communities from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. This has taken place primarily through allocation of training and access funding through the Skills.net Program, development of the Open Road Project - an online multilingual resource for Victorian Libraries, and My Connected Community, a virtual space for online communities. (see glossary of terms for details of these programs).

Many of the organisations that received Skills.net grants catered to NESB communities. This paper draws on experiences from a range of these funded organisations in order to demonstrate ways that the Internet has been taken up by ethnic communities.

Areas for discussion

A number of the factors that contribute to the involvement of NESB communities with the Internet are outlined here:

Use of the Internet

The Internet is used widely for email, education, job-searching, banking, e-commerce, access to government information and services, news, current affairs, online communication, chat, publishing and more. According to the latest Current State of Play released by The National Office for the Information Economy, 72% of people aged 16+ in Australia have access to the Internet.

Common feedback from NESB participants in Skills.net training was appreciation of the ability to be in regular contact with family and friends overseas through the use of email. The use of online newspapers and radio (both overseas and Australian) was also popular. This was seen as beneficial to newly emerging communities who have limited access to Australian media in their language.

Access to cultural and religious information, as well as music from home, was considered valuable. For those who do not have literacy, music and streaming radio have been incentives to participate in using the Internet

- *To what extent have NESB communities been using the Internet?*
- *What have been the uses?*
- *Is there more involvement in particular age/language groups?*
- *What patterns of use are there in ethnic community organisations?*

Training and skills development

The experience of Skills.net providers to NESB communities identified a number of specific requirements: that training take place in an appropriate community location, preferably with a peer group that was not intimidating. Additionally, training should be flexible, and delivered in the applicable community language if requested. [Classes were sometimes bilingual or in English only depending on the needs of the community]. Internet was often used in the context of ESL learning.

- *What is the demand for basic Internet training?*
- *Are people aware of various programs that offer training? Are there barriers to using these options?*
- *Is there a need for training for community workers who are required to access mediated information from the WWW?*

Public Access

Some of the options for public access include libraries, council offices, community centers, kiosks and skills.net providers. Provision of printers and appropriate fonts and language support are essential for accessibility. Victorian Libraries have been equipped to provide the language support required for multilingual browsing through Libraries Online and the Open Road project. Some libraries have developed further multilingual resources; including Port Philip Library, Maribyrnong, Yarra Plenty, Brimbank, Yarra Melbourne and Dandenong.

- *What is the level of use of public access?*
- *Is there awareness of the availability in Libraries?*
- *Are there barriers to using public access?*

Government Services Online

Federal, state and local governments are continuing to provide services and information online, some material has been translated. Some examples are Centrelink, The Better Health Channel, and Victorian Legal Aid. A number of Local Councils have significant translated material on their web-site, for example Darebin, Maribyrnong and Moreland Councils.

High quality translations are essential in multilingual web-sites, however the cost of translating material has limited the amount of material available and the number of languages provided.

- *What level of awareness is there of the existence of government sites?*
- *Do the targeted communities have the inclination or skill level to access these sites?*
- *What is the uptake of this government information as mediated by community workers? Are they suitably equipped to access it?*

Technical Issues

(a)Equipment

Basic equipment used to gain access to the Internet is constantly superseded. Related costs can be high, including technical support.

- *Are there barriers to accessing the Internet in community organisations?*
- *Is there appropriate expertise available to address networking and other technical considerations such as speed of connections, security, anti virus etc?*

(b)Publishing

Significant levels of expertise are required when publishing material in languages other than English. Standards for encoding, appropriate use of formats such as *PDF files* or *html* are critical in order to ensure content is accessible.

- *What is the awareness at government level of issues to do with publishing multilingual material, and addressing a multicultural audience?*
- *Have the government sites with multilingual content been created according to appropriate standards?*

Content

Skills.net providers found that people are more likely to visit overseas than Australian sites. A small number of NESB communities have been involved in My Connected Community, a Multimedia Victoria funded program, which provides an online space for community networking. Many NESB communities in Australia have established their own local web presence.

- *What is the demand for individuals/organisations to create their own content?*
- *What purpose would the creation of local content serve?*
- *Are there appropriate skill levels in communities to create local content?*

Funding

- *Have there been limitations for organisations gaining access to funding to date for training, access and equipment? Have there been barriers?*
- *What need is there for further funding, and in what form?*

E-commerce

The experience from the Skills.net program showed that in communities where skills and participation with the Internet are well developed, there has been a demand for more advanced skills, particularly for e-commerce.

- *To what extent have NESB communities used e-commerce?*

RELATED LINKS

Government

Centrelink <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/languages/index.htm>

DIMIA http://www.immi.gov.au/search_for/multilingual.htm

Australian Tax Office

<http://www.ato.gov.au/content.asp?doc=/content/corporate/otherlang.htm>

Better Health Channel <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs <http://www.voma.vic.gov.au>

Victoria Legal Aid <http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/multilingual.cfm>

Victorian Education Channel <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ch>
 Victorian Government - Growing Victoria Together
<http://www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au/translations.html>
 Victorian Multicultural Commission <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au>
 The Open Road <http://www.openroad.vic.gov.au>
 NSW Multicultural Health Service <http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/>
 City of Darebin <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/>
 City of Whittlesea <http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/>
 Infowest - City of Maribyrnong <http://infowest.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/index.htm>
 Moreland City Council <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/>

Community Organisations

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues	http://cmyi.net.au
National Multicultural & Ethnic Broadcasters Council	http://www.nembc.org.au
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Inc	http://www.eccv.org.au
Multicultural Arts Victoria	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~martsvic/
Infoxchange	http://www.infoxchange.net.au
Victorian Arabic Social Services	http://www.vass.org.au
CELAS	http://www.celas.org.au
Duke Street Multicultural Web	http://www.multiculturalweb.org
Quang Minh Temple	http://www.quangminh.org/
ADEC	http://www.adec.org.au/
Centre for Culture Ethnicity & Health	http://www.ceh.org.au/
Hungarian Community of Victoria	http://www.hungcomm.aone.net.au/main/
Cambodian Association of Victoria	http://www.cambodianassociation.com.au/
Northern Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre	http://www.nmmrc.org.au/
Migrant Information Centre -Eastern Melbourne	http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/
Transcultural Mental Health Network	
http://www.atmhn.unimelb.edu.au/library/brochures/brochures.html	
OzeUkes - Ukrainian Community in Australia	http://www.ozeukes.com/
Romanian Community of Melbourne	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~romclub/romengmn.htm
Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~scaab/
Footscray Community Arts Centre	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fcarts/
CO.AS.It	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~coasit/
Vietnamese Youth Media	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vym/
Ebtisama	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ebtisama/
Geelong Migrant Resource Centre	http://www.geelongmrc.org/
Indochinese Ethnic Chinese Association	http://www.iceca.org/

Media

Melbourne Age in Chinese	http://www.theage.com.au/chinese/rss/index.html
Neos Kosmos	http://www.neoskosmos.com.au/
SBS Radio	http://www.sbs.com.au
3ZZZ	http://www.3zzz.com.au
	http://www.3zzzchinese.org.au
Radio Australia	http://www.abc.net.au/ra/
94.7FM Geelong	http://multicultural.947thepulse.com/
Catalan Broadcasting	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~catalan/

Libraries

Multicultural Libraries Service (MCL-net)	http://openroad.net.au/mcl
Port Phillip Library Service	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ppls/sling/lotemain.htm
City of Greater Dandenong	http://www.greaterdandenong.com/infopage.cfm?SubMenuID=42
Maribyrnong Library	http://library.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/
Yarra Plenty Regional Library	http://www.yprl.vic.gov.au/lote/categories.html
Brimbank Library	http://www.brim.vic.gov.au/library/LOTE%20newspapers.htm
Geelong Regional Library	http://www.geelonglibraries.vic.gov.au/_home.asp
Hume Moonee Valley Library Corp	http://www.hmvrlc.vic.gov.au/
LaTrobe City Library Service	http://home.vicnet.net.au/~lvlib/Lote.html
Yarra Melbourne Regional Library Corporation	http://www.ymrl.org.au/

Overseas Multilingual Sites

Queens Borough Public Library (USA)

<http://www.queenslibrary.org>

Worldling™ (USA)

<http://www.worldling.org>

Deutsche Welle News (Germany)

<http://dw-world.de/>

BBC World Service (UK)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/index.shtml>

Finfo Denmark - Information for Ethnic Communities

<http://www.finfo.dk/>

Glossary of Terms

Skills.net - Part of the Victorian State Government's *Connecting Victoria* initiative, Skills.net provided grants to community organisations to deliver free or affordable Internet training and access to communities who would not otherwise have such access. The majority of grants were for \$10,000, and outcomes were delivered over a two-year period. The program is managed by VICNET and funds were made available through Multimedia Victoria, part of the Department of Innovation Industry and Regional Development. <http://www.skills.net.au> , <http://www.mmv.vic.gov.au>

My Connected Community (mc2)- Also part of the Victorian State Governments *Connecting Victoria* initiative. Mc2 is a virtual space where communities can interact online. Mc2 communities can use tools such as forums, chat, web-space, events listings and polls to communicate. There is no cost to join or to set up communities, and free training on how to use the site is provided by VICNET. Funding has been provided for project partners to help establish online communities. <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au>

The Open Road - The Open Road project is owned by the State Library of Victoria, and managed by VICNET. Designed as a resource for public libraries in Victoria, it is a multilingual website, providing a starting point for surfing web pages in different languages. The project also involved a training program for Victorian public library staff, to enable them to provide multicultural public library services; and the configuration of public Internet work-stations in public libraries to handle multilingual Internet access. <http://www.openroad.vic.gov.au>
MCL-net (Multicultural Libraries Network) is a part of The Open Road, which provides a forum and resources for the exploration of possibilities the Internet provides. <http://www.openroad.net.au/mcl/>

Internet - The global network which links computers through high speed telecommunications lines. Includes email, World Wide Web (WWW). The computers in this network all use a set of protocols for communication known as TCP/IP.

WWW (World Wide Web) - A system of Internet servers that support specially formatted documents. It forms a worldwide collection of text and multimedia files and other network services interconnected via a system of hypertext documents. Web browsers used to access the WWW include *Netscape Navigator* and *Internet Explorer*.

HTML - The coding language used to create Hypertext documents for use on the World Wide Web.

PDF (Portable Document Format) - A file format that captures formatting information making it possible to send formatted documents and have them appear

on the recipient's monitor or printer as they were intended. PDF files are viewed by using Adobe Acrobat Reader.

E-mail (Electronic Mail) - Messages, usually text, sent from one person to another via computer instead of via the postal system. It may also be sent from one person to many using Mailing Lists.

e-commerce (Electronic Commerce) - The use of computers and electronic communications networks to do business. This covers a wide range of activities, from using electronic mail (email) and EFTPOS, through to Internet based sales and transactions and web based marketing.

**Prepared by: Colleen McCombe
VICNET
State Library of Victoria
May, 2002**



Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Inc



May 28, 2002

Dear

Re: Round Table Discussion on NESB Communities and the Internet

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) and VICNET invite you to participate in a round table discussion on NESB Communities and the Internet. This discussion, part of a series of consultations, will assist in the development of future policy directions in this area.

VICNET and ECCV have developed a partnership to conduct a series of discussions throughout Victoria to address some of the most pertinent issues surrounding how, and why ethnic communities aren't accessing and using the Internet. We are particularly interested in the experiences of agencies that work closely with ethnic communities.

At the round table discussion we will be addressing two questions:

- **What are the current patterns of usage by members of NESB communities with the internet?**
- **What do NESB communities believe needs to be done to ensure on-going participation in the Internet?**

There is a growing expectation that people have access to the internet and know how to use it. Daily our reliance on the internet is growing and this trend will only increase with time. These discussions have been developed to work towards ensuring that the needs of ethnic communities in this area are addressed.

Round Table Discussion

Preston - Northern Area

Date: Tuesday June 25, 2002
Address: Council Chamber, Darebin City Council
350 High Street, Preston
Time: 10am -12noon
RSVP: Friday June 21

We hope you will be able to attend the round table. If this date is not suitable, you would also be welcome to attend the meeting for central Melbourne area at the ECCV in Carlton on Tuesday July 16. For further information please do not hesitate to contact Colleen McCombe at VICNET on 8664 7449 or email colleen@vicnet.net.au. Please find attached some brief information about VICNET and ECCV and a background discussion paper.

Yours sincerely,

Marion Lau
Chairperson
Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

Stuart Hall
General Manager
VICNET

Who are VICNET?

VICNET is Victoria's community network, delivering Internet services to people all around Victoria. A unit of The State Library of Victoria, it aims to encourage all Victorians to make the most of the Internet. As well as operating as an ISP and web developer, VICNET provides free community web hosting and manages a number of Government funded programs which provide training, access, and online participation to Victorian communities. VICNET aims to:

- Promote awareness, skills and capabilities of Victorian citizens and community groups in using the Internet.
- Enable Victorian libraries, community groups and non-commercial services to deliver electronic information and services to the community and the world effectively and efficiently.
- Encourage use of the Internet to support online communities of interest working together across Victoria and the world.
- Stimulate local communities and groups to develop their capabilities to publish their information electronically.
- Develop Victoria's Network as an inclusive entry point to the resources of the online world.

Who are ECCV?

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria is the peak non-government body representing the views of ethnic communities throughout Victoria. It was established in 1974 as a voluntary community organisation through which common concerns are discussed, consultation and liaison is carried out with and amongst ethnic communities, and issues are brought to the attention of all levels of government.

ECCV is made up of 184 member organisations. Every two years the member organisations elect an Executive Council. There are 18 positions on the Executive Council as well as the chairperson's of the 7 regional Ethnic Communities' Council's/ Multicultural Council's. The last election was held in December 2001.

The Executive Council meet every month to identify and discuss current issues. These meetings are guided by the nine policy and programming committees.

The council's vision is to participate and actively contribute in the development of a society where all Australians enjoy equity of opportunities, and realise their potential and the self esteem that flows from confidence in themselves, their particular culture and their place in a multicultural Australian society.

In order to achieve this, the ECCV will:

- a) be an effective advocate and catalyst for action and consultation; and,
- b) involve, co-ordinate, develop and empower ethnic communities in Victoria