



Wireless broadband technologies: what are they and what's in it for you?

What are wireless broadband technologies? And how can they help deliver better communications services to Australian individuals, families, communities and businesses, including those in regional Australia?

These are the questions at the heart of an inquiry which will start this month by the House of Representatives Communications Committee.

The Committee will recommend whether Government should make any changes to the telecommunications regulatory regime to ensure that Australia extracts the maximum economic and social benefits from the use of wireless broadband technologies.

In simple terms, broadband allows for high-speed data transfer, providing vastly improved Internet access with a far higher level of interactivity, but also enabling services such as digital video on demand, simultaneous phone and data and a range of applications and content that can reduce the cost of doing business and delivering government services.

Wireless technology can be used to provide broadband services over the airwaves, thereby providing unwired networking and on-line services, mobility and convenience for business users, an alternative to existing wired networks and a new range of specialist applications.

House Communications Committee Chair, Christopher Pyne, says the area is complex but with huge potential for social and economic benefits.

"The Committee will begin by examining current wireless broadband technologies in Australia and overseas, and the likely future national and international trends in their development and use," Mr Pyne said.

"We will look at the inter-relationship between the various types of wireless broadband technologies, and examine their benefits and limitations compared with cable- and copper-based broadband delivery platforms.

"The Committee is particularly interested to explore the potential for wireless broadband technologies to provide a 'last mile' broadband solution in rural and regional areas - that is, to connect businesses and households which are currently unable to receive broadband services. We will also look at how wireless technologies can encourage the development and use of broadband content applications.

"The Committee will also examine the effect of the telecommunications regulatory regime, including spectrum regulation, on the development and use of wireless broadband technologies.

"I encourage all those with an interest in wireless broadband to become involved in the inquiry. The Committee welcomes your views."

Current wireless broadband technologies in Australia and overseas which will be examined include wireless LAN (using the 802.11 standard), 3G (eg UMTS, W-CDMA), bluetooth, LMDS, MMDS, wireless local loop (WLL) and satellite.

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