

# OnlineWA Communities Program

---

**OnlineWA Communities is a program of the Strategic Directions Team of the Office of Information and Communications within the Department of Commerce and Trade.**

## **Brief Project Description**

**OnlineWA Communities is a range of products and programs which introduce people to, and raise awareness of, the opportunities and benefits of the Information Age and the Internet.**

**The availability of information and useful products will mobilise demand in regional areas for the provision of online services, leading to an improvement in telecommunications infrastructure through upgraded facilities being offered by carriers who will respond to this demand.**

## **Program Components**

The OnlineWA Communities Program includes four major components:

1. OnlineWA Communities Internet Pilot
2. International Forum: Creating and Sustaining Online Communities (CASOC)
3. E-Aware: The OnlineWA Seminar Series
4. Online Champions Network

## **Benefits to Western Australia**

OnlineWA Communities will benefit the whole of Western Australia in a number of ways:

- Increasing the ease of communication and information sharing between communities, while decreasing the cost
- Increasing the knowledge of the importance of regional WA to metropolitan WA
- Promulgating the use and delivery of communications infrastructure to regional WA
- Highlighting and demonstrating the effectiveness of the online environment
- Development of protocols which will help people get online wherever they are
- Enable people to be in closer contact with organisations they need to be close to
- Encourage businesses to explore the use of ecommerce in their operations
- Bring WA “closer to the world” and promote the State globally
- Encourage decentralisation through teleworking
- Encourage young people to stay in regional WA through being able to “stay in touch” with things of importance to youth.

- Increased linkages between rural and metropolitan areas

## **Aims and Objectives:**

1. To grow awareness of the Information Age and how it can benefit rural Western Australia through decreasing the “tyranny of distance” for business, community and family
2. To encourage the exploration of the benefits of new technology in regional WA, including applications for e-commerce and service delivery.
3. To use state of the art communications technology developed in WA to build a world class communications forum.
4. To identify and find solutions to issues which will be raised by the establishment and use of a new and pervasive communications tool, so communities will be confident and capable of adopting it for their own use, and to develop a sustainable management system for community owned and operated online services.
5. To help in the education and training of regional Western Australians in both the use of technology and in how technology can help deliver such services in the regions.
6. To continue to work closely with service delivery organisations such as the Telecentre Network, Business Enterprise Centres, local government and Regional Development Commissions to develop the framework for the delivery of services to regional areas.

## **Target Audience:**

Regional Western Australia including community groups and organisations, individuals and families, businesses, industry bodies, local government and all geographic and communities of common interest. Corporations and companies, as well as government departments which have a stake in regional Western Australia.

# **The Components in Brief**

## **1. The OnlineWA Communities Internet Pilot**

### **1.1 Short Project Description**

The OnlineWA Communities Internet Pilot is the development of a comprehensive web-based network that will assist communities to make effective use of the online world for rural and regional communications, information and service delivery; and in breaking down the “tyranny of distance”.

It will enable rural Western Australians to communicate and share ideas, information and discussion in a way that has never before been possible. The web based service will feature a robust framework which will enable communities - both geographic and interest-based - to connect easily and efficiently, through a self managed process, independent of Government.

Phase One will be the development and construction of the statewide framework as well as six pilot projects featuring one geographic community (Avon on Line) and five Communities of Common Interest (Progress RuralWA; the Multi Cultural Online Communities, MillenniumWEST and the Rural, Remote and Regional Women's Network (tripper Network). Also included will be a Regional Community Development module including CommunityWISE and Mainstreet).

Each pilot project and gateway project will be a stand-alone site with its own web address (URL); however they will also be accessible through a single website which is under development through OIC, called OnlineWA.

The service and web infrastructure will be community owned and managed. People will be able to find and add new information easily, securely and efficiently with minimum training and IT knowledge.

The projects will encourage local use of electronic services and the Internet by being user friendly and relevant, promulgating not only increased discussion and information sharing but also the use of e-commerce throughout the regions.

The OnlineWA Communities Project will lead to increased demand for online services, and the awareness of carriers that there is demand thus strengthening infrastructure in the "bush".

## 1.2 Background

This program (previously referred to as Networked Communities) was devised by OIC in consultation with various regional organisations to introduce people, through demonstration, to the online environment, enabling them to see how the Internet can be a useful part of their life, business and community, at the same time as developing a useful tool for the country.

The concept of single entry points, or single windows (gateways or portals) is that people only have to go to one website to communicate or find the information they want. The concept of communities is much enhanced by the Internet, with "communities of Common Interest" being developed. Currently communities are mostly geographic (confined to a town, street or region where people gather). However the Internet allows people with common interests to become "virtual" communities meeting in "cyberspace", not in person.

## 1.3 Strategic Links to other Internet projects

The OnlineWA Communities Internet Project will link to a number of community owned and managed portals or "gateway" projects being developed with support from OIC; as well as a number of virtual community portals. These include the Peel e-Community, the Albany

GateWAY, the Bunbury Local eTrade network, e-Broome and the Chattering Smart Community.

## 1.4 Breakdown of the Pilot Projects

The groups taking part in the pilot project have been chosen for their potential to broadly permeate the concepts into the wider community. Each pilot has a steering committee, and these committees have a representative on the OWAC steering committee.

Each pilot will be cost neutral to its community for the first six months after launch. During this time each community is expected to develop business plans outlining how they will be sustainable in the long term and where the community will find recurrent funding.

Issues such as local management, funding, community input, interoperability, new technology inclusion; growth cycles and marketing will also be addressed in the business planning.

### **1.4.1 MillenniumWEST:**

This site promote and assist in the development of Millennium events. People will be able to find out what is happening in their area to celebrate the year 2000 and the coming Millennium. They will be able to promote their own events and get information about services, events, assistance and resources. This will include a segment where people can email their thoughts on the Millennium which will be downloaded and stored as a brief electronic social history “a snapshot of this time” in WA’s history. This project is a partnership between DCT and the Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interest and Minister Mike Board.

### **1.4.2 Avon Online:**

The Wheatbelt Development Commission, in conjunction with the communities of York, Toodyay and Northam, is developing a portal site in which the community, government and local government have input to create an integrated approach to sharing information within the community. This site will be the first point of contact for people in the area for local community information; commercial and retail services; community information such as coming events, and local chat lines. It will evolve to deliver what the community wants in terms of information and online service delivery. It will be also promote the region globally.

### **1.4.3 Progress RuralWA**

An initiative of the Minister for Primary Industries this pilot project will feature a raft of initiatives which have been developed in conjunction with rural people. This is a partnership between the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Monty House and DCT. The major initiatives which will be part of the pilot will be:

*BUSHnet:* 50 communities of interest and 20 geographic communities will be assisted to “get online”. BUSHnet will allow people to do many things to communicate with each other: publishing newsletters; the publication of private articles and stories outside the newsletters; private and closed chat lines; bulletin boards; information sharing; news groups; seminars and forums on line; commerce and related programs.

BUSHnet will also include a number of other initiatives including a Statewide Traders Page; a Showcase where people can share their experience and inventions; and

*Community Builders:* Encouraging communities to come together to “value add” to their local resources. The program is a cross-boundary exercise in which groups of towns or communities with common elements are drawn together.

*Future Leaders Program:* Aimed at identifying and training existing and potential community and industry leaders in rural areas, with particular emphasis on agri-business. The program has two parts, the Foundations for Leadership (around six four day courses of 20 people run throughout the state annually) and the Future Leaders Course (two six month intensive courses of 20 people run annually). The community and industry development which results from the networks formed by bringing “leaders” together from all over the state is a major resource for the future health of rural Western Australia.

*Young Country Club:* Helping Young people in the regions learn about opportunities available in the online world, with a view to diversifying employment opportunities and keeping young people in the bush.

#### **1.4.4 Triple R Network:**

A resource for regional, rural and remote women to share information and to raise relevant issues. Its major forum is the Rural, Remote and Regional Women’s Network (TripleR) Network News which is a quarterly newsletter which features contributions on issues of importance from women all over WA. There are more than 2000 women from all over the State in the network. The women are already looking for opportunities to capitalise on the strength of communications offered by the web service.

#### **1.4.5 Multicultural Online Communities**

Western Australia’s multi-cultural groups will be able to network and share information, ideas and discussion with each other. Agencies servicing these groups will be able to disseminate their information and talk with each other in closed and open chat channels. People of diverse ethnic backgrounds will be able to talk to their homelands via the Internet on the community channel. An initial intake of 50 groups and organisations will be brought online to develop the pilot service. Ethnic cultural exchange and publishing will be encouraged; as will the promotion and recording of diverse cultures.

#### **1.4.6 The Community Economic Development Network:**

Regional communities need information across a range of government departments and non-government organisations relating to community economic development, including such things as grants and funding information; developing community plans; what types of programs are available for community development; training; access to networking and successful case studies, and information on a number of specialised programs such as STEP (Small Town Economic Planning) and Project Mainstreet. This will be provided through the online publication of CommunityWISE - a self help kit for communities.

### **1.5 Status of Project**

After a comprehensive tendering process, Harvest Road was appointed to develop and

implement the project in conjunction with OIC and the steering committee. It is anticipated that the finished webservice will be launched in November 1999.

In September 1999 OnlineWA Communities Internet Project was well underway. Progress Rural WA was launched at the Progress RuralWA conference in August. MillenniumWEST was live and ready to be launched in late September. Avon Online and the Triple R Network will follow in October, while the Multicultural Online Community will be launched just prior to the main launch. Consultation with each of the steering committee members and their representative bodies is continuing and the needs of each community being refined.

## 1.6 Funding

OIC has funded the pilot program which covers the development of the webservice and the pilot sites, as well a contribution for the pilot communities to undertake training and awareness. The Office of Citizenship and Multicultural Interests and the Department of Agriculture have contributed significantly to the development of MillenniumWEST and BUSHnet. Each pilot community has also contributed both in kind (human resources) and cash, including the employment of dedicated online officers to progress the project.

## 1.7 Marketing

The creation of the OWAC Internet pilot is in itself a marketing exercise - it is a demonstration to show people who the Internet can be used.

However its availability will be promoted in the regions to encourage use. This marketing will be done through the steering committees of each pilot project as well as through traditional methods such as regional media.

Regional community groups will be targeted with information specifically encouraging them to use the portals, and a number of programs have been developed to assist people. Each of these programs will be promoted separately.

Telecentres will be central to promoting the sites.

# 2 Creating and Sustaining Online Communities

The Creating and Sustaining Online Communities program incorporates two streams, the CASOC 2000 International Forum and NAFOC (National Association for Online Communities)

## 2.1 (CASOC 2000) International Forum

### 2.1.1 Short Project Description

Creating and Sustaining Online Communities (CASOC 2000) will be an international forum which will bring together all those interested, to discuss and grow the environment for the development, building and management of web based services which facilitate communities of interest - both geographic and virtual. It will be held in Mandurah in March 1999.

### 2.1.2 Conference Outline:

The four day forum will begin with a youth forum which will be followed by two days of conference. These two days will feature plenary sessions and concurrent works during which issues which will be raised, and solutions found. The fourth day will be a "Toolkit Day" which will provide delegates with the technical solutions to create online communities.

It is expected that some 400 delegates will attend the conference, with another audience in metropolitan and regional Western Australian witnessing the conference through Westlink and Channel 31 community television.

Nationally and internationally people will be incorporated into the process through the use of Internet discussion boards and chatlines. Overseas speakers will be included in the schedule through this technology. Speakers include Imogen Bertin from Europe Telework; Prof Peter Nelson from CSIRO and David Jonas, among others.

An expo of companies which deal with technologies and applications to assist online communities will be held in conjunction with the conference.

### 2.1.3 Conference outcomes

1. A broad acknowledgment of the parameters of online communities; what they offer and how they can be used (the development of a shared language for those already involved - and the seeding of ideas in those not)
2. To share information, ideas and experiences about all facets of communities on line including: how they were established; best practice models for frameworks; getting communities interested; populating such sites; sustainability; innovative management.
3. To bring information into Western Australia to assist in programs underway
4. To showcase Western Australia's achievements in developing communities on line with the related objective of promoting WA Industry capability.
5. To develop real solutions to the ongoing issues of community of interest web services
6. To bring practitioners together with novices in order to upskill.
7. To show the wider world what can be achieved
8. To analyse the benefits and opportunities of the online environment, particularly regarding remote and regional communities
9. To document current international practice in order to create benchmarks
10. The creation of a National project register and database of practitioners will be compiled for distribution
11. To build strategic partnerships and linkages between delegates with a view to sharing information and creating new initiatives through formal and informal channels.

#### 2.1.4 Forum Themes

1. **From Idea to Reality and Beyond** (how online communities develop - are they community driven; commercial driven, are there different types?)
2. **Online Offline - New Models for Community Development** (communities of interest explained. What are they; difference between geographical and virtual community)
3. **Showcase - Whose Doing What** (a slice of the best on offer)
4. **Now You're Up, What Next?** (populating such sites; sustainability; innovative management).
5. **Communities Doing It For Themselves** (Best practice models for frameworks; getting communities interested and online)
6. **Barriers to the New Age of Communication** (bandwidth, keyboards etc - what's happening around the world to get over these issues)
7. **Thinking Outside the Dots** (An analysis of the new type of thinking which accompanies the Online World and communities on line)
8. **The Real Thing** (demonstrations of some successful communications tools eg Harvest Road etc)
9. **Online Evangelists** (plenary on taking it all further)
10. **The Shared Experience** (more case studies and plea for sharing knowledge)

#### 2.1.5 Current Status

A comprehensive tender has been created and the management of the conference awarded to Goode and Masters. A conference committee and several sub-committees have been established and arrangements for sponsorship, budgets, speakers, the Expo are underway.

#### 2.1.6 Funding

Deputy Premier HENDY Cowan has given his support to the conference and OIC has subsequently committed to underwriting the forum. Additional funding to be sought, including assistance from NOIE in bringing international speakers. A comprehensive sponsorship package has been developed and the titanium sponsorship has been awarded already. A partnership has been developed with Smartbusiness 2000 expo to cross promote the two events.

#### 2.1.6 Marketing

A marketing committee has been established for the conference which will use a range of marketing tools to attract delegates and sponsors. These include:

- A sponsorship package
- Promotional brochures and written material
- Logo design and conference livery
- Web site
- Media package

## 2.2 National Association For Online Communities

## **(NAFOC)**

### **2.2.1 Short Project Description:**

NAFOC (The National Association For Online Communities) will convene and run an On Line Forum which will bring together individuals and representatives of organisations involved in creating, developing or managing online and Internet communities of interest (including community owned and managed portals) to discuss management and sustainability issues, as well as the impact on our national culture of this new environment.

The forum will be organised and managed by a national online steering committee convened in the first instance by Office of Information and Communications within the Department of Commerce and Trade in Western Australia.

### **2.2.2 Background**

Office of Information and Communications (Department of Commerce and Trade, Western Australia) is actively engaged in assisting the development of strategic communities of interest - both geographical and virtual. It is recognised that there are many new issues confronting such communities, and in particular the establishment of “community gateways” is throwing up challenges that need innovative responses.

OIC believes Australia has the opportunity to position itself globally as a leader in this field, hence it has committed to the formation of a national body to look at the issues which emerge from the new environments. The need for this body was endorsed at the Summit of Summits in Barossa, where it was agreed that such a forum was necessary.

NAFOC will be a major stream of input and suggestions for next year’s peak international event called “Creating and Sustaining Online Communities” to be held in March next year.

The Association will initially comprise invited members who will “meet” and exchange ideas and information through a dedicated list server that will act as a national “sounding board” for issues pertaining to online communities of interest and community portals. The service will enable the sharing of ideas as well as promoting action on a set of issues and discussion points which will assist communities of interest/ community portals to be sustainable and dynamic. An online discussion board with a number of threads looking at the different issues pertaining to the subjects will be established for feedback from the general public. This will be hosted on DCT’s website.

### **2.2.3 Current Status**

At end of July 1999, the list of people to be invited into the inaugural NAFOC had been composed and interest sought from members of Regionalforum (a national list server for people interested in community and regional development).

The list server and discussion board have both been established and it is anticipated the official launch will be in September 1999.

### **2.2.4 Funding**

The initial set up costs will be covered by OIC are expected to be under \$200.

### 2.2.5 Marketing

NAFOC will be offered to an invited list of participants. New members will be added through the list server and word of mouth.

## 3. E-Aware: The OnlineWA Seminar Series

**OIC offers a range of seminars and presentations to assist individuals and organisations to understand the online environment and the opportunities online technology can bring.**

**These seminars range from facilitating full day events with invited speakers through to providing speakers for outside events. OIC staff travel widely within WA to offer this service, and provides support and resourcing for the organising partners.**

The E-Aware seminar series is aimed broadly at:

- Local government
- Small to Medium Enterprise (SME)
- Community groups and organisations
- Individuals and families
- Regional Western Australian people
- Champions of the online environment

### 3.1 Local Government Awareness Program

#### 3.1.1 Short Project Description

A program called Hype Vs Reality is a series of interactive workshops for local government executive staff and elected representatives to educate about the role local government will have in the Information Age - including how it can streamline its business practises and communications; be more pro-active in information dissemination and work collaboratively to resource share with other councils.

#### 3.1.2 Project Background:

During the last year the Office of Information and Communications within the Department of Commerce and Trade has been attending forums attended by local government representatives. Many delegates have noted that there is little or no information and training available for councils and councillors about the impact of the Information Age on local government.

Most councils are aware that they need to know about the online environment as it will enable them to delivery their core services more effectively, and to use staff more efficiently. However councils are unsure of how to start planning for the delivery of online services in this way.

Local Government is aware of, but unsure how to address issues such as:

- Developing community gateways (portals)

- Sustaining community gateways
- Developing strategic Information Age plans for council operations
- Developing strategic Information Age plans for their communities
- Resource sharing opportunities between councils
- Opportunities for remote information sharing
- Value adding opportunities for councils to act as central information points
- Automation of council processes (such things as irrigation systems)

Several workshops have been held in regional Western Australia and many councils are now making inroads into planning for the Information Age, however most are not thinking beyond the development of a website.

OIC has a role in making information available through a series of thought-provoking workshops where the global picture of the Information Age can be distilled into the reality of council operations.

These are not aimed at IT manager, or the people responsible for maintaining IT systems. This is not a technology issue, it is a business planning and resourcing issue.

The Local Government Awareness Program are run in regional Western Australia on demand from local councils through the Regional Development Commissions.

### 3.1.3 Workshop Outline: Hype Vs Reality

- The Big Picture

What's happening globally/state initiatives and programs

- Business Planning and the Information Age

(E-commerce, what is it? - how does it impact on us? - what about security and all the other questions you always wanted to ask but didn't know where to go)

- The Good the Bad and the Ugly

Presentation featuring screen captures from websites of local government authorities around Australia - what works, what doesn't.

- Tin tacks

Where are the benefits for local government in dealing with their customers and stakeholders - saving money and effort.

- The Regional View

How neighbouring councils can work together and share resources

### 3.1.4 Marketing Strategy

The programs are promoted by direct contact to the interested parties mostly during local government events such as the IMM Conference (Institute of Municipal Managers); Local

Government Week etc.

Other contact is made through RDCs in each region offering to coordinate the programs and undertake the necessary promotion to get the councils together.

### 3.1.5 Complementary Programs

DCT also participates at local government conferences and seminars offering speakers, advice and hands-on training. For example OIC is to present a paper at the Institute of Municipal Managers (IMM) Conference in October, and to hold a training session for participants.

### 3.1.6 Status

Local Government seminars have been held in the Peel and Wheatbelt regions. Others are planned for the Goldfields, Esperance and Great Southern. On-going training is being organised. An edition of Western Councillors (which goes to all councillors and senior staff) is to be devoted to online services.

## 3.2 Regional Summits

### 3.2.1 SHORT PROJECT DESCRIPTION

TO WORK WITH REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS TO PROVIDE A SERIES OF TAILORED "SUMMITS" AT WHICH TOPICS OF RELEVANCE TO THE REGION WILL BE DISCUSSED TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE INFORMATION AGE AND E-COMMERCE. (COMPLEMENTARY OFF-SITE WORKSHOPS WITH BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS WILL BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SUMMITS.

### 3.2.2 BACKGROUND

A PROGRAM OF ONLINE WA SUMMITS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE GROWING DEMAND BY BUSINESS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PEOPLE IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGY AND THE IMPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IT PRESENTS.

THE OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS (OIC) WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS (RDCS) IN HOSTING THE SEMINARS IN EACH REGION. SOME REGIONS WILL HAVE MORE THAN ONE SEMINAR, DEPENDING ON NEED.

ANOTHER CATALYST FOR THE SUMMITS HAS BEEN THE FACT THAT IN 1987 THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION ECONOMY (NOIE) RAN TWO SUMMITS IN WA AS PART OF A NATIONAL ROUND OF SUCH FORUMS. THESE WERE EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL AND OTHER REGIONS APPLIED FOR SUMMITS, HOWEVER THE PROGRAM CAME TO AN END BEFORE FURTHER WA SUMMITS WERE ORGANISED.

### 3.2.3 OBJECTIVES

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINARS ARE:

- TO PROVIDE A FORUM TO EDUCATE AND INFORM REGIONAL BUSINESSES ABOUT ONLINE TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING E-COMMERCE, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SMALL TO MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES.
- HIGHLIGHT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR BUSINESS TO BENEFIT AND PROFIT FROM ONLINE TECHNOLOGY.
- TO BOOST THE KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF LOCAL COMPUTER AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY BUSINESSES.
- TO EXPLAIN THE INTERNET AND E-COMMERCE IN AN EASY TO UNDERSTAND WAY.
- TO RAISE THE AWARENESS OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGY AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL COMMUNITIES.

- TO PRESENT PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE APPLICATIONS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.
- THE SEMINARS WILL INCLUDE SPEAKERS FROM INDUSTRY, THE LOCAL REGION AND OIC/CAMS. THE TOPICS WILL INCLUDE E-COMMERCE; ONLINE COMMUNITIES AND THE EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES; CASE STUDIES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

### 3.2.4 Status

A consultant has been employed to undertake initial arrangements with the RDCs in each area and negotiations are underway to conduct two series of summits before December 1999:

- northern from Mid West, through Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley.
- wheatbelt (in the four major wheatbelt centres)

In each case these will be accompanied by local government awareness sessions and specially devised workshops in schools, business development groups and community centres.

### 3.2.5 Funding

The summits are co-funded by the RDCs and local sponsors and OIC.

### 3.2.6 Marketing:

The offer of the summits are promoted directly to the RDCs.

The RDCs are responsible for promoting the summit once they have agreed to host it, however a marketing package is being developed by OIC to assist.

## 3.3 E-Aware Stalls, Stands, Speakers and Staffing Program

### 3.3.1 Short Project Description

OIC makes expert speakers available from among its staff members for speaking engagements around Australia.

A special exhibition stand has been developed for expos and conference booths which is staffed by trained OIC staff and contractors which encouraged people to learn about OnlineWA and gives the them hands-on opportunities to use online technology.

Recently OIC OnlineWA Communities staff have been invited to present at a number of national events including a national communications summit at Parliament House in Canberra; an Infomatics Conference in Queensland and a national Regional Networking Conference in Ballarat.

### 3.3.2 Marketing:

The availability of OIC's resources is promoted through word of mouth and directly to targeted partners.

### 3.3.3 Status

A stand was taken at the Dowerin Field Days and as a result a more interactive approach is now to be taken, with staff offering "mini training sessions".

Staff ran an interactive session at the Progress Rural WA Conference and also established an

online conference presence which allowed remote delegates to be involved in the conference.

A full list of OIC's commitments is held on the OIC system, document number #10942.

## 4. Online Champions Network

**The Online Champion Network aims to create a network of “champions” and mentors in the community and business who will be able to assist other people make the transition into the Information Age. The champions will be assisted with tools and resources to give them knowledge and skills in marketing and public relations.**

Most people know about the Information Age and the Internet but often don't have enough knowledge on why or how it applied to their life - in their business, community or family. They often rely on friends who have more knowledge - the “dinner party specialist”. However these people are often not well enough equipped with information to answer all the questions which come up. In order to generate a ripple effect of interest and awareness it is important to create and support champions.

There are three components to the Program:

1. Creating and Supporting Champions Program
2. SME Awareness Program
3. Tools and Resources Development Program

### Components of the Online Champions Program

#### 4.1 Creating and Supporting Champions

**4.1.1 The Online Champions Kit:** designed for key regional people identified because they have an interest in the Information Age and can “spread the message” The kit gives them up to date and easy to read information on all aspects of the Information Age including what it is; what is e-commerce and how can it be used by businesses; a run down of current projects in WA, and what the Government is doing. The kit also includes information on marketing - including speech notes, how to be invited to be a speaker, a media pack and other advice.

**4.1 2 .Cyberspace Seminars:** Targeting senior executives in Government and business to give them hands-on experience in online technology so they are aware of it and feel comfortable with it, before beginning further inquiry into its applications.

**4.1.3 In house champions :** Helping people in organisation with “good ideas” make them happen in business, government and community groups. These might range from small programs in ecommerce (putting a particular service or product on the Net for sale) or in helping devise communications programs.

## **4.2 SME Awareness Incubator**

### **4.2.1 Short Project Description**

To assist selected small business people to create e-commerce business plans for their enterprises with the anticipation that they get their business “online”; and act as a demonstration for other businesses.

### **4.2.2 Background**

A comprehensive pilot program was run in the Peel region and resulted in 30 businesses being assisted to create ecommerce business programs, which they are now incorporating. Several have already gone online as a result and are reaping the rewards of increased business. This pilot was funded by the State and Federal governments. In light of the success of the program, the statewide rollout is currently being planned, and will use elements of the Peel model, and incorporate other ecommerce educational strategies.

### **4.2.3 Current Status**

The Great Southern region has developed, in conjunction with OIC and the Albany Gateway, a model to skill up ecommerce business mentors. This will lead to six people going online and then helping others.

In the Wheatbelt, a train the trainer program is to be run using the Ecomm Now product which was used in the Peel. A series of workshops featuring speakers from OIC will be running throughout the Wheatbelt for the Better Business Groups - these will help in identifying business people who want ecommerce.

Peel in phase two of the Peel eCommunity project which hosted the initial incubator. It is now looking at a range of projects, including a trading network to help local businesses work together, and a larger project in which the employment opportunities of the online environment are to be developed.

The South West has engaged a specialist trainer/adviser who is working with local businesses.

### **4.2.4 Funding**

OIC has seed funding for the SME Awareness Program, and this is augmented locally and from other funding sources (such as the Federal RAP and ITOL programs).

### **4.2.5 Marketing**

The SME Awareness Program relies on targeting specific industries and identifying possible mentors and trainers. This is done through regional associations and networks. The progress of the incubators will be documented through traditional media. A series of tools/ resources is being developed by OIC to give people enough information to make an informed choice about whether to be involved in ecommerce, or the incubator programs.

## 4.2 Tool and Resources Development Program

**A range of tools and programs have been created to assist people who are identified as online champions. The tools include:**

- **The Online Champions Kit** (as outlined above)
- **Get Online, WA** - a brochure about getting online, what the Internet is, what it can be used for; other types of online services; ecommerce and a “how to” series. This is to be distributed via a 1800 number.
- **Profiting from OnlineWA** - a video of six Western Australian businesses which have successfully gone “online”
- **Online Services Explained** - A booklet which defines and described online services
- **The Ecommerce Centre Web Site** - a website which provides information for people about ecommerce and how to get into it, as well as a registry for people in the industry.
- **EcommerceCentre Booklet** - a printout of the contents of the Ecommerce Centre.
- **Guidelines** -Guidelines to assist people to do online conferencing and communications is being written and should be published in mid-October.