

Trucks, The Tyranny Of Distance and Tarrington

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This paper provides an overview of **MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool** and its associated projects. It explores how **Trucks, The Tyranny Of Distance** and **Tarrington** are relevant to developing a telecommunications project in a regional area.

Far from being intimidated by the telecommunications super-race, Warrnambool is making a name for itself in cyberspace. MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool (www.ansonic.com.au/multimedia/) is Warrnambool's hot spot for Internet access ! This community based joint venture between Warrnambool City Council and Deakin University is a "state of the art" training facility in a conveniently situated "shop front" at 200 Timor St. in the CBD of Warrnambool. The establishment of this facility was also made possible with funding assistance from the State Government Of Victoria's **Skills.net** program, the Commonwealth Government Of Australia's **Online Public Access Initiative** and The Uebergang Foundation.

MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool provides services in a value adding capacity to businesses, various community groups, Deakin and TAFE teachers/students as well as the Directorate Of Schools Education. MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool has an important part to play in providing:

- **ACCESS** to on-line communications and leading edge technology for Warrnambool & district residents and visitors.
- **TRAINING** for the community, businesses, and the education sector.
- **INNOVATION** in the local Multimedia industry. Clients who have skills, or have developed them at the centre are able to provide specialist services through the facility.

Multimedia Warrnambool now incorporates the **hot spot Internet Café** (sponsored by Deakin University). Visitors can enjoy a variety of espresso coffees and delicious bytes while finding out information about community access to the Internet, training programs and special initiatives planned for the remainder of 1999 and in to the new millennium. Visitors can also discuss Deakin (www.deakin.edu.au) courses with University staff by arrangement.

Already a leader in the industry through Multimedia Warrnambool, the city is taking the next step in using technology for community networking by becoming a "virtual community". The WOW site (www.warrnambool.org) provides a central entry point for Warrnambool. WOW is effectively an online gateway or portal to Warrnambool providing a "window" on the region with an extensive database of all there is to see and do in the south-west region. And because the information is on the Internet, it is on display to everyone on-line.

It is both a window on Warrnambool and a window on the world, directing traffic on the Internet in, out and within the region. As a non-commercial, non profit organisation, the site is community-based, but also provides links to education, local businesses and Warrnambool City Council. It also links significant Internet sites with a focus on tourism within the region and supports the development of 100 Internet web-sites for local community organisations.

The project operates with the help of commercial and community steering committees. Community representative Max Preece said WOW puts Warrnambool on the international tourist map. "People are able to check out what Warrnambool has to offer – like the spectacular Great Ocean Road and the Grampians – and book a B&B online,"

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he said. "It will also put Warrnambool on the international business map, showcasing our businesses." You do not have to be a high flying technocrat to benefit from the telecommunications developments, Max said. "Almost everyday there are people here (at the Multimedia Warrnambool centre) of all ages. Even if you have never sat in front a computer before, you can learn to use the Internet," he said.

The centre provides locals (as well as international visitors) with state-of-the-art multimedia resources and training. Equipped with 23 personal computers, the centre offers basic training in e-mail and the Internet as well as digital video editing, animation, music production and desk-top publishing.

Recently MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool has become a key player in a **Youth Enterprise Initiative** in the town. Its aim is to enhance the opportunities for young people to be engaged in areas of information technology and multimedia. It will utilise the skills and enthusiasm of young people in accelerating the adoption of Information Technology within the Warrnambool region communities and within business and industry.

Community access is the biggest part of this project. It's all about skilling people so they can maximise the full benefit of the technology.

But what of trucks, the tyranny of distance and Tarrington ?

Trucks

Well trucks are just another place you see web addresses. In our district, Kalari transport has their web address (www.kalari.com.au) signwritten on the back of their vehicles. My young son is truck mad, and recently on a trip returning from Portland he noticed the web address on a Kalari truck. Upon return to Warrnambool he jumped on our home computer, logged on to the Internet and typed in the address on the browser. He then spent considerable time drooling over the Kenworth trucks and other vehicles shown on the page.

As a 7 year old he was able to do this in a matter of fact manner using the computer and the Internet because it is there. In my son's case it is a tool and there is no novelty !

The Tyranny of Distance

When leaving to go to Hamilton recently, my son asked in a very concerned tone, "when are you going to be home Dad ? Are you staying over night, because it is a very long way.... too far to drive home"

For my son, although it is only an hour away, going to Hamilton is as good as going overseas. His perception of the physical world is unsophisticated, and yet using the world wide web, he can access information about American truck manufacturers from their web-sites. He down loads pictures and other information at a great rate. For him the Internet addresses the physical "tyranny of distance" by bringing the world closer.

And.....Tarrington

My father grew up in Hamilton and would tell us kids all about his glory days playing football as a youngster and about the great team from Tarrington. I went through Tarrington on my way from Warrnambool to Hamilton recently and I couldn't help thinking about my dad. To him as an older person his past and family history is really important....just like trucks are to my son. We work a lot with older people at MULTIMEDIA Warrnambool. In fact most of our Skills.net training has been done with Senior Citizens. They want to learn how to use this new technology so they too can:

- Research
- Understand the jargon<http://www.whatever.com> and,
- Communicate with their children and grand-children.

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I believe that the real power of the Internet is that it can be used as a tool for RESEARCH, EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION by people of all ages, whether they are 7 or 70.

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