



Virtual Opportunity Congress V The Digital Economy

“The open and collaborative nature of the Internet challenges traditional policymaking processes, and a multi-stakeholder approach to achieving an appropriate balance of laws, policies, self-regulation and consumer empowerment may be the only way to promote the Internet economy effectively.”

“Shaping policies for the future of the Internet economy”
OECD 2008 Report



With a billion web users worldwide, the global economy is increasingly driven by the virtual world. The Internet phenomenon, barely a decade old, has the potential to transform public administration and commercial service delivery and revolutionise economic relations. Vital sectors such as health, the environment, education and transport are already being transformed by the networked information and communication technologies (ICTs) which promise to dominate the future.

Alongside the opportunities they create, the dynamism of the Internet and the rapid pace of technological innovation pose a plethora of challenges to individuals, governments and businesses. Advances in digital technology and the dissolving of national boundaries in cyberspace render traditional approaches to its regulation irrelevant. Emerging technologies such as ‘cloud computing’ may require safeguards to promote their adoption, while web 2.0 social networks create new challenges for those who seek to control the dissemination of sensitive information¹.

Australia has embraced the extraordinary opportunities of the Internet revolution. E-business and e-government are major areas of growth, economic opportunity and performance reform². According to the first annual AIMIA Digital Services Index³, Australian businesses spent \$19.7 billion on digital services in 2008 and their ICT generated revenue now accounts for almost one in every four dollars earned. The same survey predicts that the use of digital channels to engage with customers will increase by at least 6% in 2009.

In response to the OECD recommendations⁴ for the future development of the Internet economy, Global Access Partners (GAP), in association with the National Consultative Committee on Security and Risk (NCCSR), will convene the **Virtual Opportunity Congress V on the Digital Economy** in 2010⁵.

The Congress will bring together one hundred senior figures from government, business, academia and civil society to review the objectives and results of existing policies and identify the new opportunities and challenges presented by evolving information technologies. **Virtual Opportunity V** will be held in the Legislative Assembly Chamber of a state Parliament House and will operate as a multi-disciplinary think tank, with delegates participating in the debate conducted in a parliamentary fashion. A comprehensive report will summarise the recommendations and outcomes of the two day discussion and outline strategies by which Australia may stay at the forefront of the global information revolution.

¹ The GAP Congress on Regulatory Affairs: “Opportunities for Business” Report, November 2008

² The NCCSR Submission to the Australian Government’s e-Security Review, July 2008

³ Australian Interactive Media Industry Association (AIMIA) Digital Services Index;
<http://digitalservicesindex.com.au>

⁴ “Shaping policies for the future of the Internet economy”, OECD 2008 Report;
www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/29/40821707.pdf

⁵ More on GAP’s Virtual Opportunity series (1997-2006) at www.globalaccesspartners.org/eventvirt.htm