

# **Darebin Digital Strategy**

**2013 – 2018**

**Contents**

Executive Summary .....3

Introduction.....4

Darebin’s e-Community .....5

    A Definition .....5

    A New Era in Darebin.....5

    Broadband Infrastructure in Darebin .....7

    Managing Digital Isolation .....8

    Transition Management.....10

Managing Change .....11

Darebin’s Competitive Advantages .....12

Synergy with the Northern Region .....14

Strategic Projects for Darebin .....15

    Leadership and Avocacy .....15

    Small Businesses .....16

    The Arts & Creative Community.....18

    Council Services.....19

Building Sustainable Business Models .....21

Recommended Action Plan.....22

APPENDIX .....24

A. The National Broadband Network, 3 Year Plan.....24

B. Incubator Models .....25

C. Consultation Outcomes .....26

    Word map.....26

    Project Methodology.....26

    Information and Themes Obtained.....27

## **Executive Summary**

Darebin City Council has developed a Digital Strategy to guide and prepare Council and the community to maximise the economic, social and community benefits of participation in the rapidly rising national digital economy and leverage opportunity from regional cooperation.

Council recognises that the digital economy holds opportunity to deliver more effective and efficient services to its community and capture and foster new economy industry within the municipality. As an early beneficiary of the scheduled roll out of the National Broadband Network (NBN), Darebin is in a sound position with an early advantage.

The Strategy provides a pathway to foster local innovation and sustainable action at a community level, harnessing local strengths to maximise social inclusion and social benefit from the evolution of a vibrant digital economy within the municipality.

The Strategy also reflects Council's commitment to the Charter for Melbourne North Regional Digital Economy Strategy. This is a document that guides commitment by the North's seven councils to collaborate and create a world-leading regional eco-system of digital innovation and share benefits across the region.

The Strategy identifies focus areas for action and regional leadership by Darebin and aligns with federal and state government programs surrounding the NBN.

### Introduction

In 2013 Darebin is a municipality undergoing transformation in built form and land use. Strong population growth, ageing population and the gentrification of the Municipality coupled with a structural change to the nature of local industry and commercial activity, are all factors influencing the community's needs into the future.

Darebin is responding to increasingly complex social issues, including pressures from a widening socio-economic divide; growing numbers of young people abandoning school education; a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community needing to access services; and an increasingly ageing population.

The application potential of the digital economy for the City of Darebin is expansive and multi-dimensional. Active local participation in the digital domain offers significant economic, community and social benefits to all. Council will take a proactive role in helping to guide and shape actions to ensure the strategic advantage of access to early NBN roll out is maximised to the City.

Council's capacity to fund, resource and lead a proactive Digital Strategy is limited. The Strategy focuses on activity that will deliver sustainable projects that are driven and resourced by council, business and community stakeholders.

The development of the Digital Strategy involved input from Council operational staff, management, executive management, councillors, small business, industry, community agencies, not for profit, social enterprises, residents and volunteer based organisations.

As a result of the consultations it is apparent that Council has the capacity to support a limited number of digital innovation projects in the community, while also seeking to increase its own internal digital economy capabilities. The Strategy therefore focuses on achieving local and regional outcomes in two key projects in the initial stages while recommending a review of existing business models to free up resources for more initiatives. A culture of innovation must be fostered across the Municipality.

Council sees the technology component of the digital economy as an enabler, not the solution. Technology forms part of a larger eco-system which improves outcomes for people across the community.

The Digital Strategy identifies a number of flexible actions that will encourage Council, businesses and residents to engage with the identified digital innovation projects and progressively access the fast broadband to:

- increase residents' access to technology and information
- increase employment opportunities for residents
- create greater workplace efficiencies
- increase capabilities and opportunities to compete locally and globally, and
- allow Council services to reach more residents and achieve cost and efficiency savings.

### Regional impact

The Strategy is designed to complement the development of similar strategies by other councils within Melbourne's Northern Region (Banyule, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra) and form part of a collective team effort to implement the Melbourne North's Regional Digital Economy Strategy.

The regional vision is formulated in the knowledge that it is difficult to forge a digital economy at a municipal level due to the limited size of each Municipality. A digital economy requires a regional approach at minimum to create a self-sustaining ecosystem of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) digital innovation activity for both consumers and suppliers. A regional approach requires both co-operation and collaboration across member councils to build the necessary levels of activity and momentum at the appropriate economies of scale to effect sustainable change within the

region. The value of the regional digital economy is the benefits it provides to both enhanced business competitiveness and increased social amenity for local communities. This translates to creating more local jobs and making Melbourne’s North a better place to live which still provides more opportunities available locally.

Darebin will lead some initiatives and will be the beneficiary of other projects undertaken by the other Councils. This approach will allow for collaboration between Councils, create shared learnings and assist all Northern region councils to understand and take advantage of an active digital economy.

The focus is on stimulating digital innovation and developing an active digital economy within the existing broadband capability and as the roll out of the NBN gains momentum, greater capability, capacity and competitiveness will be achieved.

### Darebin’s e-Community

#### A Definition

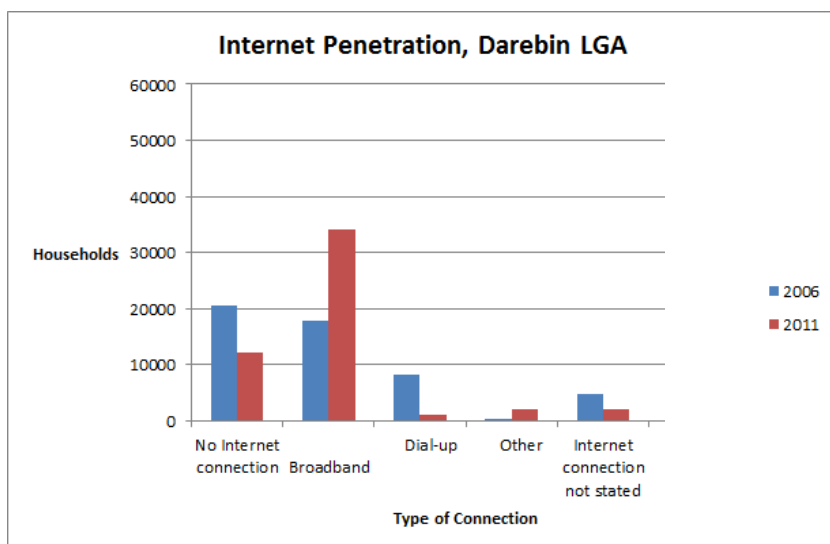
The Australian Government defines the Digital Economy as: the global network of economic and social activities that are enabled by platforms such as the internet, mobile and sensor networks.

High speed fixed broadband, wireless, satellite and mobile networks are the new “essential utilities” which provide the infrastructure to support the Digital Economy. The network should be invisible to users as they access new and existing services. The true value of the digital economy for Community and Business is through the creation of services and applications that deliver meaningful value and productivity gain.

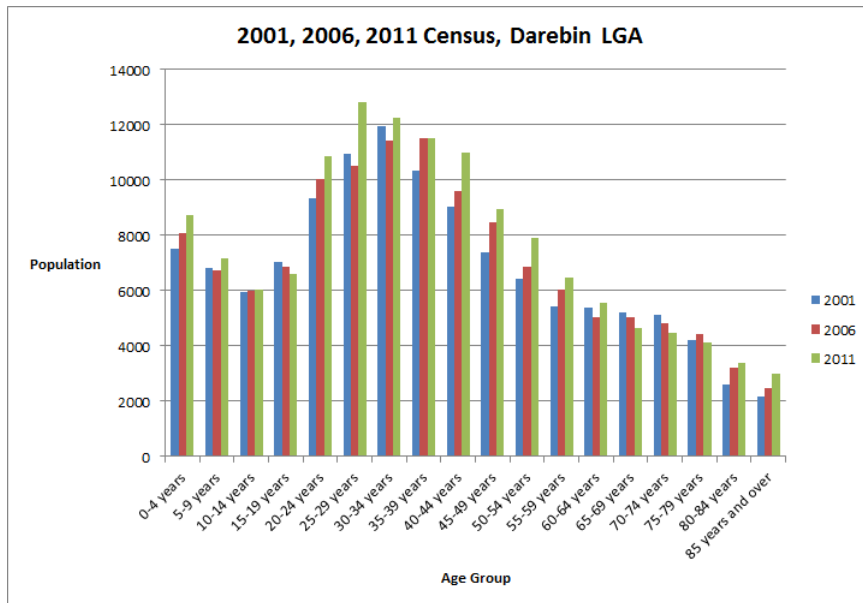
#### A New Era in Darebin

Internet penetration in Darebin by Household in the 2011 Census data indicates that 72% of Darebin’s households now have an internet connection with significant growth in broadband connections compared to the 2006.

It is important to note that the Census data does not measure the number of residents that have access to the internet outside of homes and businesses through 3G smart phone technology and similar devices.



### Population Trends in Darebin



The 2011 Census data by age group shows an increase in a younger (20– 50) and older (80+) demographic in Darebin relative to the 2006 Census. While it is not possible to draw final conclusions from this high level data, some general observations can be made:

- An increasing younger population will demand broadband and on-line services;
- The current demand for HACC may not increase rapidly in the near term, but as it does gradually increase it is likely that the residents receiving the services will have higher levels of ICT literacy compared to the recipients of HACC services today;
- An increasing younger population will most likely lead to an expansion of micro businesses and home businesses.

The above observations were largely supported by discussion with external stakeholder groups conducted as part of formulating the Strategy. Specifically:

- An active digital economy has begun to emerge within the Darebin community and is expanding using today's broadband infrastructure;
- There is an active network of micro businesses that are calling for better training, better networking and better local facilities to help grow their businesses;
- Broadband is an essential part of attracting new residents and businesses, and it is essential for holding on to existing residents and businesses.

These trends will present challenges to Council. They also highlight a significant opportunity for Council to take a leadership role in this space.

The Strategy acknowledges that there is still a significant amount of work required to eliminate digital isolation within the community. However it recognises the trend towards much greater digital literacy within the community which will lead to greater expectations for on-line service delivery.

By Darebin attracting an increase in both a younger and older demographic it will place emphasis on the need for leading-edge broadband infrastructure. Council will need to continuously re-evaluate its understanding of digital literacy levels in the community and business.

### Current Broadband Infrastructure in Darebin

Broadband services in Darebin are provided in many ways:

- ADSL services delivered over the same copper wire infrastructure that delivers the telephone services;
- 3/4G Mobile networks;
- Cable (HFC) infrastructure;
- WiFi provision as the Reservoir free WiFi trial in Edwardes Street and Broadway

The evolution to a Digital Economy should not be regarded as being tightly coupled to the rollout of the NBN. Many of the new service delivery models can be delivered on broadband infrastructure currently available today, giving Darebin the flexibility to commence new business models and improve them as NBN is further deployed across the Municipality.

#### *National Broadband Network*

Darebin has been successful in securing a significant NBN deployment in the initial 3 year plan as shown on the NBNCo website. The current NBN rollout plan was stated by the CEO of NBNCo in March 2012 in **Appendix A**. The suburbs in Darebin included in the NBNCo 3 year plan are listed in the table below.

Under current government policy and planned implementation the NBN will ultimately replace all fixed broadband services in Darebin with a combination of fibre optic and fixed wireless communications. The current construction plan will take 10 years for the NBN to be completed. This timeline will need to be re-visited should there be a change in Federal Government policy.

#### **NBN deployment in Darebin 2012 – 2015**

<b>Suburb</b>	<b>Post Code</b>	<b>In the NBN 3 Year Plan</b>
Alphington	3078	No
Bundoora	3083	No
Fairfield	3078	No
Kingsbury	3083	<b>Yes</b>
Macleod	3085	No
Northcote	3070	No
Preston	3072	<b>Yes</b>
Thornbury	3071	<b>Yes</b>
Reservoir	3073	<b>Yes</b>

This deployment plan does not cover all of Darebin; it is still one of the largest NBN footprints in metropolitan Melbourne and is a positive incentive for the community and business to view Darebin as a “broadband enabled community”.

It is unlikely that lobbying for more NBN footprint in Darebin will be successful without a clear commitment to new digital economy initiatives, and even with commitment there is little time to achieve major change to the NBN rollout schedule before the 2013 Federal election. Council will need to also understand the Federal Coalition broadband strategy.

#### *Service providers*

In addition to the NBN rollout, major service providers like Telstra are continuing to upgrade their broadband infrastructure to deliver better services.

It is likely that NBN deployment in areas where the current broadband infrastructure is being upgraded will be deferred to the latter stages of the national rollout plan.

Darebin must establish a broadband blackspots register on behalf of its residents and businesses, develop a clear understanding of the reasons for the existence of the blackspots, and implement advocacy strategies on behalf of the residents and businesses taking into account all forms of broadband infrastructure.

### **Managing Digital Isolation**

Council has a comprehensive Equity & Inclusion Policy 2012 - 2015 (EIP) that commits Council to: *“Work with and for Darebin community in a way that recognises and acts to change the multiple and complex ways in which discrimination and poverty create barriers that limit people’s rights and abilities to achieve their full potential and a life of dignity and well-being”*

The EIP policy recognises the role of technology as part of the eco-system to drive equity and inclusion. Notably, since the EIP was prepared Darebin has been successful in securing a significant rollout of the NBN and the 2011 Census has shown a significant increase in household internet penetration from 51.1% in 2006 to 72% in 2011. The Strategy recognises that there still remains a significant part of the community who are potentially “digitally isolated”.

The first step in reducing digital isolation is to understand those sections of the community who do not use the internet and why. In an on-line world, all people must feel they can participate, and importantly there must be a common passion for on-line communities to exist and grow. Creating relevance is an important aspect of encouraging greater on-line participation.

Encouraging people to participate in on-line activities, training people and measuring results from training programs generally requires a more sophisticated evaluation effort and process than training service providers normally anticipate. However, the result can often be well worth the effort as demonstrated in the Federal Government’s Broadband for Seniors project highlighted in the National Digital Economy Strategy published by the Department of Broadband and the Digital Economy in 2011.

The technology as mentioned is an important enabler, but not the solution to improved equity and inclusion.

Digital isolation can be caused by social/economic factors or inadequate broadband infrastructure:

#### *Broadband Infrastructure*

Several generations of different broadband technology are deployed in the Darebin LGA footprint. Some of the older broadband technology platforms are limited in speed, and were not designed to support 100% broadband penetration in their service area.

In addition to the deployment of the NBN there are other upgrade programs being undertaken by various service providers. For example, Telstra is currently undertaking a major upgrade program of their “street cabinet” based infrastructure to improve the broadband services delivered from this infrastructure.

Springthorpe Estate is an example in which the broadband penetration and speed has been limited. The feedback from representatives from Springthorpe is that lack of broadband connectivity is a major disincentive for people to move into the area and would result in people leaving the suburb.

The NBN will take 10 years to complete and until completion, there will continue to be broadband blackspots or areas which have lower grade broadband that does not meet the needs of residents and business. Darebin must therefore work continuously to ensure its residents and businesses have access to suitable broadband services through the following key activities:

- Develop a black spots register with insight into reasons why they exist;
- Ongoing support for the current NBN rollout plan and advocacy for the Darebin LGA;
- Develop an understanding of upgrade programs for broadband infrastructure and the potential for these programs to deliver improved service quality, penetration and speed as an interim step before the NBN;



- Consideration of the impact of the Federal Coalition strategy for NBN, including developing a contingency plan to support this rollout in the Darebin LGA should this eventuate;
- Consideration of alternative technologies to support business and residents in specific cases where there is no acceptable alternative for broadband service delivery.

### *WiFi*

WiFi is an excellent service for hot-spots such as libraries, business areas and shopping strips, and can be branded as a Darebin initiative. It can also be used to support multiple services such as security surveillance if needed.

Darebin has been proactive in the establishment of WiFi infrastructure to assist in filling blackspots and/or providing affordable access to the internet as needed.

Darebin has implemented a free WiFi trial in Reservoir to provide affordable broadband services to residents who were not connected to the internet as well as providing broadband connectivity in the shopping strips of Edwardes Street and Broadway. The residential take-up on the WiFi trial was low and required a significant marketing effort to achieve the small uptake numbers. The usage within the shopping centres by traders and consumers has been relatively successful. The trial allowed for Council to understand the requirements for resources, marketing and promotion to deliver such an innovative project. Council intends to roll out WiFi in other areas of the City using commercial operators to assist with the project. The WiFi project will deliver positive outcomes in increasing ICT literacy and reducing digital isolation.

### *Social & Economic Factors*

It is imperative that all sections of the Darebin community be included in the evolution to the Digital Economy.

With approximately 72% of the Darebin's households connected to the internet and rapid growth in the use of smart phone technology and similar devices, Darebin has evolved to become a digitally enabled community. Those who are not part of this trend will become increasingly isolated as more on-line services are created for the community and business.

The first step in closing the digital divide is to tap into collective knowledge within Council, the Neighbourhood Houses and other support agencies to more clearly identify those people who are digitally isolated and the reasons why this is the case. Programs to assist these people to make greater use of ICT must be relevant to their lives and affordable.

In an online world, all people must feel they can participate, and importantly there must be a common passion for on-line communities to exist and grow. Creating relevance is an important part of encouraging greater on-line participation.

There can also be short-term savings to people through using Voice over IP (VOIP) telephony. These strategies must be clearly explained as part of the effort to demonstrate benefits in the transition to new technologies and the on-line world.

Within a decade the NBN will become the network which will be the only means to deliver a fixed service to homes and businesses, including the only means to deliver a telephone service to homes and access to emergency services such as the 000 service. Therefore all people will be affected by the NBN, and the transition to this new network must be managed in a way that is a pleasant experience and not a trauma.

Key components to promote digital inclusion are:

- providing ongoing training program in basic Internet and IT skills;
- sharing of experience and applications in the use of ICT to promote relevance;
- providing affordable broadband;

- providing computers or devices to access the internet;
- providing access in public spaces;
- identifying specific areas of need and developing projects to assist people using ICT as an adjunct service;
- providing support.

Training programs are currently available through neighbourhood houses, libraries and various Government initiatives. These programs need to be strengthened and focused to address needs and create relevance. The reach of some of these programs could be expanded through new incubator centres.

Social justice lobby groups such as Infxchange are currently working with the Federal Government to define and organise an affordable social tariff for people who are economically disadvantaged and digitally isolated. The intent of this effort is to provide people who would be deemed to be eligible for the social tariff to gain access to services available on the NBN and other broadband networks at a heavily discounted rate.

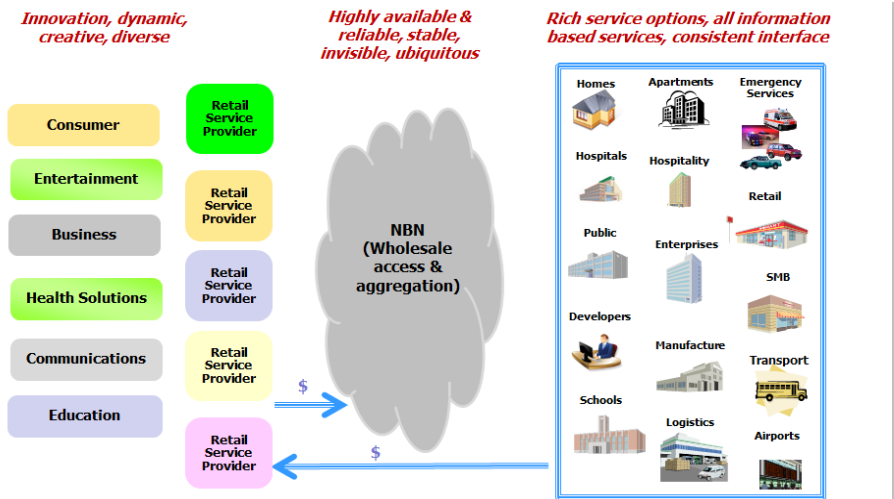
It is recommended that Darebin support and helps lead the advocacy for this initiative as its outcomes offer the best long-term sustainable solution to meet the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged residents. Darebin could focus effort on defining the eligibility criteria for people to obtain access to the social tariff.

### Transition Management

Within a decade the National Broadband Network will become the only fixed network for delivery of all telecommunications services to homes and businesses in Australia.

The NBN is a wholesale network provider that provides wholesale services to Telephone and Internet Service Providers (TISP). Residents and business will continue to have a direct relationship with their TISP.

#### The Value Chain of NBN



The deployment of the NBN and the transition of all fixed line services (like the basic telephone) to the NBN is a massive undertaking and there will be many practical problems, often as simple as coordinating the activities of the resident, the current service provider, the new service provider and NBN to manage the installation and transfer of services without disruption.

There is a significant body of work being undertaken by NBNC, Telstra, other TISPs, Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) and other organisations to make the transition to NBN a seamless operation - but there will almost certainly be "bumps" in the process. Given this near

certainly there is an important role for Council assist with managing community expectations and guide people, particularly the disadvantaged and isolated, through the transition process. There will be times in the rollout where neighbours in an area will have different service offerings available because some are connected to the NBN and others are not connected. This will also apply to businesses. It is important that a business or resident select a TISP that will manage this transition process without significant charges.

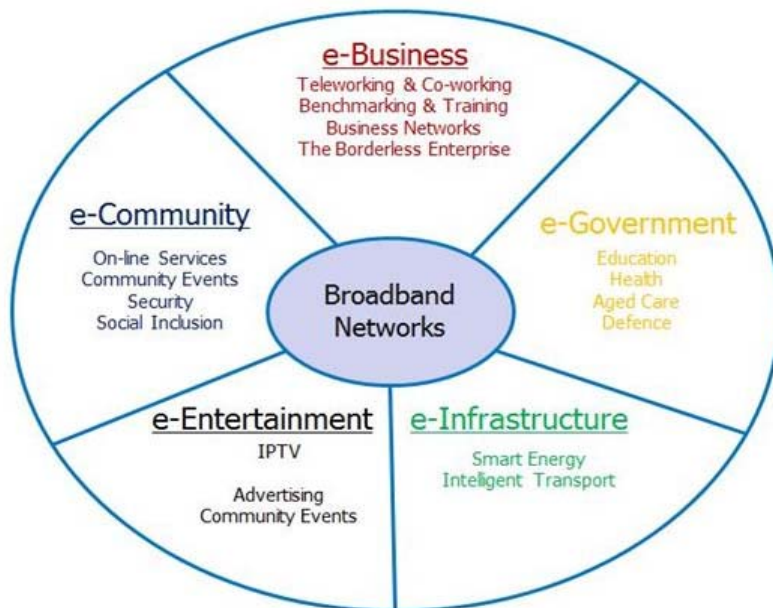
Also all fixed services must be transferred onto the NBN after it is deployed in an area. Most telecommunications services are delivered today on the copper wire network owned by Telstra. Telstra plan to decommission (remove) the copper network from an area 18 months after the NBN is declared as “ready for service” in that area. In short this means that the copper wires will no longer be in place so even the basic telephone service will no longer be available on the copper wires.

There is a role for Council to assist, guide and explain this transition process to businesses and residents so that expectations are managed. Council should also assist in the education of its community before and during the NBN deployment, in particular taking care to assist the diversity of residents in the Darebin community.

### Managing Change

The digital economy has the potential to impact all levels of service delivery shown below.

#### *The Scope of the Digital Economy*



Key trends in the evolution towards the digital economy include a proliferation of devices personalisation evolution to the cloud and increased machine to machine sensor based communications for energy management, home automation, aged care monitoring, environmental monitoring and so on.

The strategic direction for Darebin is to become a digitally enabled and a digitally enabling Council. To achieve local proficiency, scale and sustainability in each area of the digital economy it will require the systemic application of effort, investment and expertise to a range of considerations including policy, regulation, competition, infrastructure, innovation and education.

To drive this change, it is recommended that Council establish a new organisation function to manage the transition to the Digital Economy. It does not fit naturally into the current Darebin organisation

structure; rather it spans all parts of the organisation and is a “whole of business” function. The function should be empowered to implement change and be responsible for:

- articulating a clear and simple vision;
- advocacy for Darebin on broadband and the digital economy;
- managing the role of Darebin in Northern Region initiatives;
- educating all Council staff about broadband and the digital economy;
- leveraging the Northern Region initiatives for the benefit of Darebin;
- inspiring people to think about change and to not fear making adjustments along the journey;
- developing an internal culture aimed at productivity improvement and innovation;
- exploring new business models and partnerships;
- fostering an eco-system of innovation and cooperation in the community and business;
- considering people and the need for process re-engineering to deliver change;
- addressing the change process in manageable steps with a clear objective to deliver sustainable outcomes.

It is acknowledged Darebin will be resource and finance limited through the early period of evolution to the Digital Economy. A key aspect of change management will be the need to look at freeing up resources for new initiatives by changing current service delivery models, seeking new partnerships and other actions. The role is effectively the “digital champion” of Darebin.

### **Darebin’s Competitive Advantages**

The Digital Strategy aims to leverage Darebin’s competitive advantages and opportunities in the Municipality and the wider region to encourage, foster and develop a vibrant local digital economy and achieve successful, sustainable outcomes for Council’s effort and investment.

Stakeholder consultation, interviews and workshops were held with the Darebin community, businesses and council staff, a review of existing trends in the Darebin community, and recent Census information has assisted this Strategy to reveal local strengths that can provide the foundation for focused and successful action to build a viable and sustainable digital economy. These strengths and opportunities are identified as being:

- ‘Younger’ population
- Creative arts community
- Thriving micro business culture
- Incubator culture
- The largest HACC program in the Northern Region
- A well established and well managed Neighbourhood House network.

### **Younger Population**

Recent 2011 Census data reveals two important shifts that have a bearing on the development of the Darebin Digital Economy Strategy:

1. more than 76% of households within the municipality have access to broadband
2. a ‘younger’ population is evident with an increase occurring in residents aged 20 to 50.

These two factors suggest that a more IT literate and capable community exists in the Municipality than initially supposed and that the community requires a more sophisticated form of local support and encouragement than is currently available.

Council’s Youth Services function has identified that, similar to other Municipalities in the region, a growing number of young people aged from 13 to 18 (particularly youth from low socio economic backgrounds and CALD communities), are drifting away from participation in structured school education.

As a direct consequence of disengagement from secondary school education young people put at risk their ability to reach their full economic potential and increase the risk of becoming welfare dependent.

An encouraging feature of this sector of the community is the likelihood that young people appear to have access to broadband in one form or another, including access to 3G phone technology. This finding suggests that a sufficiently attractive digital economy and education program that encourages the participation of young people could provide the needed impetus to return young people to structured education, enhance their attractiveness in the job market and substantially increase their opportunity to benefit from the digital economy.

### **Creative Arts Community**

Darebin is widely acknowledged as being a home of large, thriving and diverse arts communities that range from the traditional arts and handcrafts of painting and pottery to modern digitally enabled arts including graphic design, publishing, animation and games design.

Many arts based practitioners in Darebin have already moved to embrace the digital economy and in many different ways are operating locally and selling their products and services nationally and globally. A significant number of these practitioners operate in isolation from one another and are at the formative stages of becoming nationally and globally competitive. Many of these practitioners lack an opportunity to collaborate with likeminded locals, attract funding, participate in training or know how to operate a business.

### **Thriving Micro-business Culture**

With an increasing number of individuals and families needing to derive income from multiple sources, many are exploring income potential from participation in the digital economy by offering products and services to local, national and global buyers. This is particularly evident in the increasing number of people who use generic services such as e-bay to sell product.

Darebin is home to a burgeoning sector of micro-businesses - very small businesses that typically involve one or two people, operate from small offices or home offices and can generate from between \$50,000 to \$1.5 million per annum turnover. The growth and development of these businesses can be hampered by lack of access to affordable services, training, advice and investment. The fleeting nature of commercial business opportunity in the digital economy space (for example Application – APP - development) often requires a need for urgent action and collaboration with local people who offer different skill sets and abilities. Anecdotal evidence is that local forums do not exist through which micro-business operators can meet, network and collaborate.

### **Incubator Culture**

Darebin is closely associated with Darebin Enterprise Centre Limited (DECL) which run two successful incubators within Darebin. These incubators are highly regarded as encouraging best practice and supporting and assisting the development of successful local enterprises.

This success provides Darebin with sufficient evidence to advocate for support for the introduction of a new form of incubator that enables local micro-business to obtain greater outcome from their participation in the digital economy. With added support at the regional level through NORTH Link and Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia (NMRDA), Darebin has an ability to harness local expertise with incubators to develop a model that could have wider application across the region and contribute to increased economic outcomes in Darebin and Melbourne's North.

### **Home and Community Care Services (HACC)**

Darebin City Council delivers the largest HACC program in Melbourne's Northern Region and is a resource intensive service obligation that currently engages more than 200 full-time, part-time, casual and outsourced people. In servicing the largest community of elderly and disadvantaged people in the region, Darebin not only retains extensive corporate knowledge in the field of effective HACC Service delivery, it is in a strong position to identify rising trends, needs and challenges for service delivery in the wake of a steadily increasing residential population requiring services. Based on its footprint in HACC Darebin is in a strong position to trial digital innovation in HACC service delivery and in doing so, meet growing technology literacy among elderly residents and Council's strong commitment to achieving maximum social inclusion outcomes.

### **Neighbourhood House Network**

Darebin has an established network of community based Neighbourhood Houses that intersect with different niche community needs ranging from socially disadvantaged residents, people from cultural and language diverse communities, the elderly and women. These centres provide access to training, local support and other services that are of high value in the community. The Strategy identifies that Neighbourhood Houses provide a valuable foundation for reaching and meeting the needs to people who are socially isolated and are poised to deliver greater benefit by harnessing aspects of the Digital Economy.

### **Synergy with the Northern Region**

The seven municipalities of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra, together with regional organisations NORTH Link and Northern Melbourne RDA that comprise Melbourne's North Region recognise that the Digital Economy is a catalyst for innovation within the region to drive better outcomes for public services and the regional economy.

The seven Councils are working together to develop a strong regional digital economy and share common goals:

1. Commit to working together by signing a Regional Charter
2. Primarily focus on facilitating digital innovation in the sector areas of Arts & Tourism, Industry and Small Business, Health & Aged care and Education to strengthen them to deliver better outcomes for our local communities
3. Identify sector leading ways to implement digital innovation into Local Government service delivery.

These focus areas were identified through a process of interviews and consultation with a wide cross section of regional stakeholders and through a major regional workshop.

Across the Region there are a number of digital economy projects underway or in planning. But many of these projects lack a Regional focus, and the existence of the projects is not widely understood by interested parties. Darebin should assess each of the current digital economy projects for relevance to the Darebin community and leverage this work for the benefit of the Darebin community where appropriate.

Darebin should also take a lead role for the Darebin community and the region in areas where Darebin has clear strengths (as described in the preceding section). Council would seek regional support for this effort such that Darebin develops a model of practice that is inclusive of participation and outcomes across the region.

To facilitate access to digital economy projects across the region, the Regional Charter and Strategy recommend the establishment of:

1. A register of active and planned digital economy projects to allow the sponsor of the project to connect with interested parties across the Region and strive for greater economies of scale.
2. Sharing of performance measures, technologies adopted and outcomes from Digital Economy pilot projects.
3. Fostering a cross-sector view of digital economy projects to identify common approaches to technology and processes.
4. Facilitate the dissemination of work by Regional Development Australia, which is promoting a national survey of businesses and online engagement to provide local businesses with an ICT scorecard.

Council is resource and finance limited so it is important to consider shared services business models across the region as an integral part of this process. Councils have common requirements for call centres, after hours support and so on. Also, many of the IT systems are similar and creating a shared service infrastructure or outsourcing some of these systems should be investigated with the aim to free up resources to support the evolution to new service delivery models in the digital economy.



The delivery of high speed broadband through the NBN enables the transition to a shared services (cloud) architecture.

It will often be the case that the ICT infrastructure can be used to support multiple services across the Regional economy, hence providing the opportunity for aggregating demand across multiple sectors of the Regional economy. An example of this is:

- A common video conference infrastructure to support Council services, in-home tele-health consultations, business incubators and so on;
- A common infrastructure to support on-line festivals, on-line exhibitions, live streaming and so on;
- Applications can be hosted once on behalf of the Region.

To maximise outcomes for its community Darebin needs to play a role in larger regional projects defined to address these areas and to link them to core projects identified.

### Strategic Projects for Darebin

#### Leadership and Advocacy

Darebin City Council will adopt an approach of advocacy and facilitation in the introduction of a structured, effective and sustainable digital economy within the Municipality and the wider Northern region and will look to seek funding in this area.

The Regional Councils, notably Whittlesea and Moreland, DECL and the Brunswick Incubator are already active participants in securing funding for projects under the Federal Government Digital Economy Strategy Programs, specifically the *Digital Communities Initiative*, *The Digital Local Government Program* and the *Digital Enterprise Program*. Darebin must evaluate these initiatives to assess what benefits can flow to Darebin as quick wins.

While the formal applications for funding have closed, further rounds of funding applications will follow and Darebin should focus on seeking additional funding support in key projects consistent with this digital strategy and lead these on behalf of the Region.

#### Key focus areas

Through a process of interviews and consultation with council officers and a wide cross section of local stakeholders, many themes were identified as benefiting from greater application of digitally-enabled processes.

The key focus areas identified through the consultation program were:

1. Micro Business
2. Arts
3. Council Services
4. Facilitating Broadband Rollout

In addition to focus areas identified in Darebin there will be ongoing activity at a regional level to develop larger projects to deliver key outcomes in Health and Aged Care. Council should apply resources to participate in these projects.

These local focus areas are by no means the full scope of digital economy activity Darebin could stimulate and develop, but rather they represent existing strengths in the Municipality and provide the best starting point for a journey of viable rapid evolution that also represent areas consistent with Council services, economic development and social inclusion.

The suggested focus areas also represent areas of considerable interest to the Federal Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy, and may likely attract the interest and support of the State Department of Business and Innovation.

Leading the regional effort in arts and small business to external audiences, including State and Federal government, Darebin will present its own compelling case and also leverage the political clout and prestige that is attached to being the envy of the shared interests of a major region comprised of nearly 1 million people.

Darebin’s efforts and successes will generate valuable data and information that will be registered in a Regional database and shared with other regional council members in accordance with the charter commitment to create a Regional eco-system. Darebin will be an exemplar in the development of its own and the Regional Digital Economy through adopting greater use of technology in the delivery of council services and in creating a culture of use in business and the community. Darebin will assist in the education process by making available public access points through council facilities such as libraries. Council will implement change primarily in accordance with its own strategy and budget constraints.

Darebin needs to facilitate the establishment of regular Digital Innovation forums in each of the areas to share information and foster the development of applications and service delivery models. For each of these focus areas to become a successful part of Darebin’s Digital Economy, it is necessary to maximise the active participation of business and the community.

Providing a program of education and training on the Digital Economy will be a key component to support each focus area. In addition to addressing the benefits of technology, the education process must encourage ongoing participation by fostering relevance and interest for new users. This education process can be assisted by tapping into the skill base of highly digital literate youth in Darebin.

**Small Businesses**

Darebin has a thriving and diverse local economy serviced by more than 10,500 businesses. Over 63% over these businesses are self-employed and 90% of the businesses have less than 5 employees. This makes small and micro businesses a very important and integral part of Darebin’s economy.

Australian Business Register - 2011.

Number of Employees	Number of Businesses
No employees	6,619
1 - 4	2,490
5 - 19	1,060
20 - 49	205
50 - 99	87
100+	48

‘No employees’ contains sole proprietors where the proprietor does not receive a wage or salary separate to the business income.

**Key Themes for Micro and Small Business**

<b>Micro and Small Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Create an incubator space that allows for the fostering of emerging micro business in the digital economy.</li> <li>ii. Foster awareness and collaboration between micro-business.</li> <li>iii. Leverage support from the business community in Darebin and the region to provide advice, support and services.</li> <li>iv. Support incubator space with software hosting and storage, data distribution and broadband connectivity.</li> <li>v. Examine potential for Libraries to take an active role.</li> </ul>
---------------------------------	---



	<p>vi. Examine potential for ‘micro-loans’ of \$5 to \$10k (this level of investment is almost impossible to obtain).</p> <p>vii. Examine potential for stimulating micro business activity in the digital economy by identifying, supporting and marketing need for local ‘apps’ establishing Darebin as a hub for innovation at scale.</p> <p>viii. Develop a strategy to foster business networking in Darebin which must encompass a business register, a local jobseekers database, a property database, incubator café database.</p> <p>ix. Support development of regional Information, Problem Solving and Partnering Portal (<i>to assist business to access information that may help to solve business problems, connect with new partners, create a local marketplace for services</i>).</p> <p>x. Organise Workshops and Think Tanks relevant to the needs of local business (<i>valuable to educate and inform business on how best to use new technologies associated with the NBN, demonstrate their value to business and encourage their uptake into business processes</i>).</p> <p>xi. Foster Local and Global Networks  <i>The digital economy can empower local business and community initiatives, drive awareness of what is available locally, build and sustain local business networks, supply chains and distribution networks:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>tap into consumer demand for local goods and services,</i></li> <li>• <i>help to build community connections – bring people together through local portals or online directories</i></li> </ul> </p>
--	--

Addressing the need for incubators:

The needs of the small business community are served by the establishment of a dynamic incubator model which provides for networking, innovation and trading. There are different models of incubators as described in **Appendix B**. The Café Style incubator best serves the need of the small business community in Darebin based on the feedback from the consultation process. There are models for Café Style incubators such as Seats2Meet model from Europe. There are also businesses that can work in partnership with Council to provide training, networking and trading in Darebin as adjunct services in the incubators.

The siting of the incubators can also enliven the surrounding shopping precincts which will evolve to support the people who use the incubators. They can also support linkages to education and training institutes to assist in keeping youth aware and interested in the opportunity of using their skills to start a micro business. The eco-system of interested parties and the business outcomes from an incubator network are shown below.

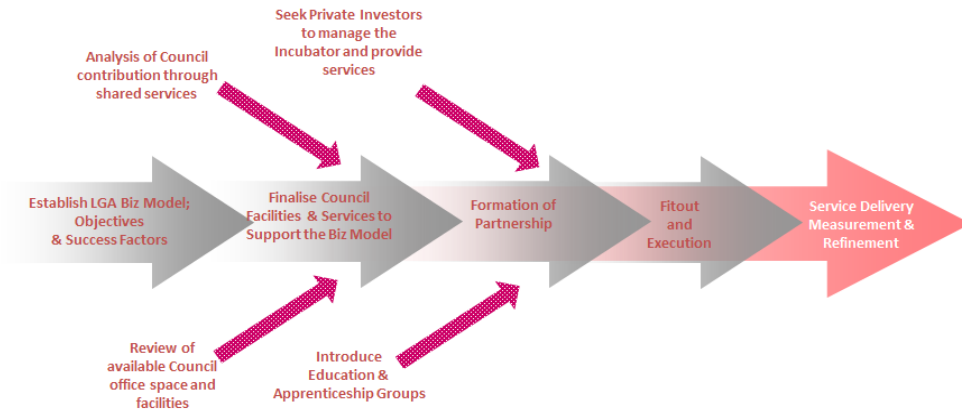
An incubator model and fostering local entrepreneurial businesses pre-supposes that high speed broadband is available at the incubator and at the home or premises of the entrepreneurs. Broadband is a basic utility for networking, exchanging information and marketing. If it is not available the business model goes back to a geographic location to work rather than fostering a distributed model

The Council has its library network, the Neighbourhood House network and council properties, all of which could be leveraged to establish an incubator network. In addition, Council has the ICT skills to ensure that quality infrastructure is established in the incubators and later migrated to arrange a different model as the incubators become self-sustaining.

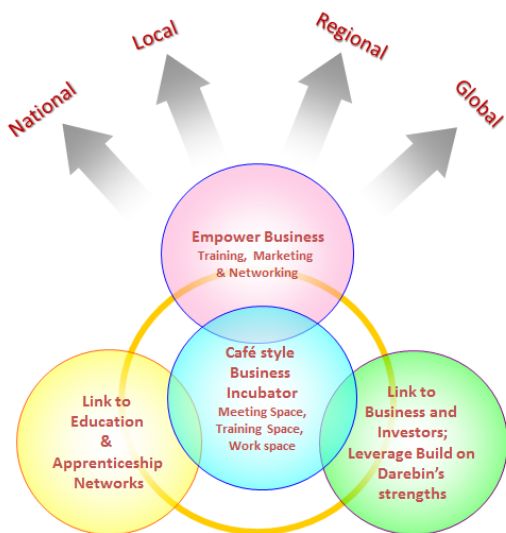
Through the auspice of local library networks councils already provide centres of information, expertise and basic equipment access around which a thriving base of local micro business is participating in the digital economy and is evolving. There is scope for Darebin to provide support for more business development and encourage these micro businesses to evolve and develop into more structured, capable and independent organisations. The Neighbourhood House network is also training people in IT skills and encouraging different sections of the community to develop their micro business skills.

The key steps in establishing an incubator network are shown in diagram below.

**Evolution to the Café Incubator Model**



**The Incubator Eco-System**



**The Arts & Creative Community**

In 2006 Darebin had 1.5 times the Melbourne average of people earning their living through the arts, with Thornbury having twice the Melbourne average and Northcote a sizeable 3.7 times the average, according to Census data. The NBN in Northcote and Thornbury will provide a platform for artists to undertake interactive online exhibitions and provide artists' comments and teachings in different languages.

The arts and creative community of Darebin includes many small and micro businesses that increasingly are focussed on the on-line and new media segments. They need space to support this segment in the same way as described under Small Business above, with the additional request to have some incubator facilities equipped with specific facilities, like a simple green room, to support their craft.

The availability of high speed broadband and hosted (cloud) services significantly expands the avenues to market through creating on-line exhibition space. The creation of on-line exhibition space can also free up the physical arts and entertainment facilities for wider access by the community.

Council has the ICT skills to support the creation of on-line exhibition space, either as an adjunct to existing systems, or through establishing and managing an outsourcing agreement. There is also a close correlation between on-line exhibition space and the services that libraries provide and the synergy should be explored and leveraged.

Live streaming and capture of performances in the Darebin municipality is an extension of the on-line exhibition space. The ability for an on-line viewing audience to have an enjoyable experience is dependent on the availability of high speed broadband.

### Key Themes for the Arts & Creative Community

<b>Arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Create a Digital Media Business precinct.</li> <li>ii. Leverage the significant creative community in Darebin and the region.</li> <li>iii. Support the creative community by fostering café incubators and providing new seed infrastructure such as a creative incubator space (software hosting and storage, data distribution and broadband connectivity).</li> <li>iv. Create on-line festival (or expand any existing), feature live streaming of content, virtual exhibition hosting and distribution.</li> <li>v. Foster collaboration between artists.</li> <li>vi. Foster collaboration between artists, schools, TAFEs, Universities, libraries, community and arts organisations.</li> <li>vii. Foster arts based micro business.</li> <li>viii. Examine linkage between on-line arts and on-line tourism, including opportunity to create an interactive local history library.</li> <li>ix. Examine commercial relationships with corporate sponsors.</li> <li>x. Examine and apply for various government grants and programs to achieve funding to foster and support local participation, marketing and promotion.</li> </ul>
-------------	--

### Council Services

Following discussion with council staff, a list of potential council projects were identified that would greatly enhance Darebin’s service and efficiency. The complete list is provided in **Appendix C**. This list has been distilled to three potential opportunities that could be evolved into viable e-government services as summarised in table below:

While Council has the ability to implement all projects identified, there are resource and finance limitations which restrict in practice what can be done.

A broader review of current service delivery models and internal systems is required to determine if there are different business models that can free up funds and resources to implement new service initiatives. Some examples are:

1. **Shared Services in the Northern Region:**  
The Councils all offer similar ICT services and common requirements for multi-lingual call centres and after hours call centres.  
With the availability of high speed broadband and backhaul capacity, more of these services can be delivered from a shared central site with back up facilities.
2. **Partnerships**  
Darebin Council provides a quality set of services to its community. But there are other service providers that have larger scale operations which could become a valued partner enabling the Council to free up internal resources.
3. **Home and Community Care (HACC)**  
There are many sectors of the economy that are developing digital strategies. Council should open a broad dialog to seek co-investment or partnerships. Darebin runs the largest HACC services in the northern region. This is an area that imposes quite heavy workload on the carers.

Based on the demographic data from the 2011 Census, there is not likely to be a significant increase in the demand for HACC services in Darebin over the next 3-5 years. But the next wave of people requiring HACC are likely to have greater ICT skill than the current recipients of HACC. This creates the opportunity now to study the workflow patterns within HACC, enhance the case management system, and conduct pilots of new ways to deliver the service in anticipation of the next up-swing in demand.

4. **Police and Community Triage (PACT)**  
PACT is identified as an external opportunity for Darebin. This police inspired program has been trialled in the Moorabbin region with great success and additional areas are being investigated for expansion. PACT links police on patrol to a triage team of health, mental health, housing and counselling experts who case manage improved outcomes for vulnerable people with local service providers. Via digital communication means police are able to provide greater assistance to people encountered on patrol when these people are in need. An opportunity exists for Darebin to participate in the development of local case management and improved outcomes for HACC clients; particularly given Darebin is one of Victoria's largest providers of HACC services.

**Key Themes for Council Services**

<b>Council Services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. On-line OH&amp;S system:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Evolve into a region wide initiative via Regional CEO forum</li> <li>b. Publish information on the trial, progress, findings and outcomes</li> <li>c. Seek support and inclusion of major agencies and related health and insurance groups</li> <li>d. Promote as an exemplar of current best practice</li> <li>e. Examine potential for take up as a service by other councils</li> <li>f.</li> </ol> </li> <li>ii. Aged/disability client case management system:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Bring together service stakeholder groups and related institutions</li> <li>b. Test need for a case management system</li> <li>c. Engage with key service provider in the Darebin footprint to develop new business model for the delivery of HACC services within the constraints of the Darebin budget</li> <li>d. Test market for existence of on-line service option</li> <li>e. Advocate project to government and other organisations for investment and support for pilot project</li> <li>f. Develop required system solution or modify existing product</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
-------------------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g. Implement pilot project</li> <li>h. Circulate information, data and results of pilot</li> <li>i. Review efficacy of project and solution</li> <li>iii. Other council projects that may be suitable for development:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Expanded Library WiFi</li> <li>b. Medication monitoring/remote monitoring for aged/disability clients</li> <li>c. Maternal vaccination and immunisation</li> <li>d. Child Health</li> </ul> </li> <li>iv. In conjunction with the Northern Region, investigate models to implement shared services in ICT</li> <li>v. Education and advocacy for ICT in the community</li> </ul>
--	--

**Building Sustainable Business Models**

The Internet has broken down the significance of geographic boundaries and has enabled service delivery from anywhere in the world. Similarly, new digital services can be provided from Darebin and not need to be replicated by the other six councils in the Melbourne North Region while maintaining the separate identity of each municipality through branding at the point of delivery.

A key aspect of evolving the Digital Economy is the need to create sustainable business models that ensure continuity of service in Darebin, Melbourne’s North and beyond.

As new service models are defined a key consideration will need to be an assessment of how to implement a self-sustaining business model and the identification of the organisation best equipped to deliver the services. This organisation may or may not be Darebin City Council.

In the context of Darebin being both digitally enabled and a digitally enabling Council, consideration of business models should extend to partnerships with related service providers or investors. Darebin should explore partnerships with business, private operators, not for profit organisations to manage the projected growth in service delivery.

Co-investment opportunities exist for the establishment of business incubators and in the provision of HACC services. However, it is important for Darebin to take a leadership role in the management of the quality of service delivery. Different service model approaches that can be considered include:

- i. Provide leadership in fostering a multi-sectoral approach to service delivery; Examples could include working with the Energy companies or the major telecommunications service providers to add support for in-home management of recipients of HACC services.
- ii. Creating efficiencies through delivering new services from shared local infrastructure in conjunction with the Northern Councils, NORTH Link and the Northern Melbourne RDA. Examples could include case management of recipients of Council Services, using a shared video conference infrastructure for in-home care and liaison with Council;
- iii. Exploring new business models to support the Digital Economy by aggregating demand to secure better pricing, membership, sponsorship, managing content aggregation;
- iv. Consideration of the benefits of acting as the Regional content aggregator

Irrespective of the approach, or combination of approaches chosen, the aim is for Darebin is to create efficiencies and generate funds that can be used to sustain and improve services, and also contribute to reducing digital isolation in the Municipality and the region.

Across the Region there are a number of digital economy projects underway or in planning. Many of these projects lack a regional focus, and the existence of the projects is not widely understood by interested parties across the Region.

To foster the creation of a sustainable world-leading eco-system of digital innovation in Darebin and Melbourne’s north, effort needs to be invested into establishing a common language for projects

across the region and an active network of business, community and government information sharing that occurs in an open way.

In developing its digital economy and digital innovation projects Darebin will need to:

- Foster a user centric view of Darebin's digital projects in the Municipality and Region.
- Maintain a register of active and planned digital innovation projects that relate to the key digital economy focus taken by Darebin.
- Allow the sponsors of digital innovation projects to connect with interested parties across the Municipality and Region and strive for greater economies of scale.
- Share performance measures, technologies adopted and outcomes from projects.
- Foster a cross-sector view of digital innovation projects to identify common approaches to technology and processes.
- Facilitate education of the community.
- Contribute to the creation of a regional 'Information, Problem Solving and Partnering Portal' through which business across the Municipality and region can interact.
- Create a register of the ICT businesses in the area that can support the digital economy.
- Establish local innovation forums focused on two specific focus areas (small business and the arts community) of the Digital Economy to expand on initial ideas and develop sustainable business models to support these ideas.
- Host regular forums aimed at informing business of opportunities and technology developments.
- Identify and approach potential sponsors and investors for the digital innovation projects.

Darebin City Council will work to foster the inclusion, participation and leadership of major industry, small business, education and health institutions, utilities, community groups and other interested parties within the Municipality and wider region in the development and operation of the selected Darebin digital innovation focus projects. Through this process the aim is to:

1. Aggregate demand;
2. Identify opportunity for shared resources and infrastructure to achieve greater efficiency;
3. Do it once with regional support.

### **Recommended Action Plan**

Actions within the Strategy are separated into three distinct timeframes for implementation. This is similar to the Regional Strategy.

**Stage 1: 0 - 24 months:** To establish the framework for implementing digital innovation and commence the projects:

- Within Council implement an organisation function responsible for managing the evolution to the digital economy.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of project needs (infrastructure, budget, resources etc) and methodologies to free up internal resources and funds to facilitate implementation.
- Prepare a feasibility study and business case for the establishment of a local café style 'digital' incubator.
- Commence projects highlighted by the Digital Strategy.
- Support initiatives that promote digital innovation within the organisation.
- Undertake local promotion and marketing to maximise community engagement and involvement with the nominated digital projects.
- Identify those who are not connected to the Internet.
- Identify project promotion and publicity program to stimulate municipal wide and regional awareness and understanding of each project.
- Analyse the business model for deployment of WiFi in shopping strips and implement WiFi hot spots.
- Join the Governance Committee for developing the Northern Region Digital Economy, leveraging projects already underway for the benefit of Darebin.

- Engage with Infoxchange and support advocacy for introduction of social tariff for NBN.
- Facilitate the establishment of Local Innovation Groups for local arts and small businesses. These groups will focus on specific areas of initial action to create a sustainable digital project.
- Engage with Federal Department of Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy and relevant State departments to seek support for identified projects, leveraging regional support.
- Register projects with the proposed Regional *Information, Problem Solving and Partnering Portal* to facilitate the interaction and advice of interested parties in the Municipality and across the region.
- Enhance public facilities to provide equitable access for all of the community, and to create the environment for networking of people and business.
- Lead advocacy to Federal and State Government to seek support of identified digital innovation projects.

### **Stage 2: 12 to 36 Months:** Embedding the culture of networking and innovation:

- Attend bi-annual plenary sessions at which the output of the Darebin and Regional Innovation groups can be shared and enhanced;
- Strive for the creation of new service delivery models with particular focus on:
  - Greater use of shared infrastructure;
  - Aggregating demand across the Regional economy in the sector to deliver better commercial outcomes;
  - Delivering sustainable services;
  - Harnessing creative capabilities in the community;
- Strive for digital inclusion of all people in the community through ongoing education and by demonstrating the relevance of applications and services;
- Enhance public facilities to provide equitable access for all of the community, and to create the environment for networking of people and business.

### **Stage 3: 24 Months Onwards:**

Provide a sustainable culture of digital innovation, networking and inclusion within Darebin.



## Appendix A

### The National Broadband Network, 3 Year Plan

On 29 March 2012, the NBNCo announced its 3 year rollout plan. Mike Quigley, the CEO of NBNCo, described the following principles used in the development of the 3 year rollout plan:

- i. Complete the sites that had already been announced.
- ii. Take into account the instructions the government, which was to get a balance between regional and metro areas. And also to achieve a balance across the states of Australia and to complete Tasmania by 2015.
- iii. Build the plan on the basis of the infrastructure that was available from Telstra.
- iv. Prioritise "growth corridors", where there would be the majority of greenfields sites so NBN Co could get those done as efficiently as possible.
- v. Prioritise links that were essential for the operation of the fixed-wireless network and the satellite earth stations in preparation for these networks to be in place by 2015.
- vi. "load balance" for construction contractors and adjust the build to prevent congestion in local communities.
- vii. Ensure that James Cook, New England, Wollongong and Melbourne universities had access to fibre as they are researching high-speed broadband applications.

The rollout of the NBN is a 10 year construction project.

The NBN rollout will require 10 years to complete and will occur progressively in accordance with the defined NBNCo rollout plan. There will be times in the rollout plan when near neighbours in an area will have different service offerings available because some are connected to the NBN and others are not connected. Also multi-site businesses will have some sites on the NBN and others will not be on the NBN. It is important that a business or resident select a TISP that will manage this transition process without significant charges.



## Appendix B

### Incubator Models

#### Co-working Centres

A co-working centre is generally a facility that provides access to basic services and can be hired to use on an as needs basis. The benefit of co working centres are that people can work closer to home, thereby reducing lost time in commuting and therefore contribute to greater productivity, reduced need for expensive real estate in the central CBD area and reduce emissions from travel. The model also allows for a more 'family friendly' outcome. Such centres offer a number of attractions for local economies, including flexible working spaces that allow for multiple users and the sharing of services such as video conferencing. Co-working centres would likely be more distinguished as facilities that host employees of mature businesses that would pay fees to allow workers to access the facility.

#### Incubators

A traditional incubator model of the nature of the Brunswick and DECL Incubators establishes a facility that provides services, mentoring and supports the permanent presence of businesses through their establishment and development. Generally the incubators become self-sustaining through payment contributions made by the hosted businesses. Incubators can host between 10 to 40 businesses. Most models are described as 'Cathedral' structures where external incubator hierarchy interacts with and have ongoing relationship with each incumbent business, which may or may not exist in a form of co-working or collaborative relationship with other businesses operating in the incubator. Northern Melbourne Regional Development Australia estimates that approximately \$2M is required to establish a viable local incubator that can support and accommodate between 25 to 40 business enterprises.

#### Café Incubators

Micro-business within Darebin suggests that Council consider a more flexible form of incubator - the "Café style incubator" that would provide a common space connected to specific technical capabilities that can be shared and used by different users within the Municipality. Such spaces could be used collaboratively according to the needs of a project. In this model businesses do not become anchor tenants. Council would seek interest from local residents, micro business and small business and establish a 'register' from which identified users could then book and access the centre for a fee. The centre could also be used as a facility to provide access to services such as video conferencing. This model combines the merits of libraries, co-working space and incubators.

As we drive towards greater digital enablement of business and the community, it is anticipated that the structure of work will change with more teleworking (a Federal Government initiative) and more small entrepreneurial enterprises that respond quickly to market needs.

A Café Incubator model provides a means of networking and cooperation to assist these small enterprises to innovate and go to market. These small enterprises will often use social media to self-organise provided the basic facilities are available as a networking hub.

It also provides a mechanism for training in business, and for linking the small enterprises with large enterprises and investors.

## Appendix C

### Consultation Outcomes

#### Word Map

The following diagram provides a visual representation of the relative degree of emphasis and response different individuals and groups provided to stimulus in workshops:



The strongest five themes that emerged from the various workshops and forums were:

- Arts community
- Micro business
- Libraries
- Incubators
- Youth

#### Project Methodology

The consultation process for the development of the Darebin Digital Strategy was guided by Business Development and principally involved workshops, interviews and discussion with various stakeholders from the Darebin community and within Council.

An internal Steering Committee was established to guide the development and implementation of the consultation process. This Committee comprised of the following:

- Director Corporate & Business Services
- Manager Economic Development & Civic Compliance (NBN Project Manager)
- Chief Information Officer
- Manager Aged and Disability Services
- Manager Library & Youth Services
- Manager Early Years & Children Services
- Manager Communications & Advocacy
- Manager Major Projects & Transport
- Manager City Works
- Manager Arts, Culture & Venues
- Manager Community Planning, Partnerships & Performance

In addition to workshops and interviews with council staff from each of the identified steering group sections, a series of external workshops were held with local small businesses, community and other stakeholders that were identified as having an interest in the digital economy and contribution to make to the development of a Darebin Digital Strategy.

### **Information and Themes Obtained**

The following information identifies key recurring themes and issues raised through consultation in contemplation of the development of a Darebin Digital Strategy and the potential of becoming more involved with information delivery in the digital economy. All information obtained has been collated into key areas.

#### **1. Aged & Disability Services**

- Darebin Digital Strategy should add value to council services by changing the nature and effectiveness of what council is doing for aged and disability
- By 2025, around 25% of residents will be over the age of 60; and the number over 80 will be increasing, this will introduce greater strain on Council, particularly the potential of people becoming isolated in an increasingly more digital economy
- Utilise to address social isolation of aged/disabled people in our community
- Introduce case management to better coordinate council service delivery to residents and provide overview of service intersect/contact from other providers with resident clients
- Medication monitoring and remote monitoring – particularly for the chronically ill
- Facilitate greater and easier connection to relatives

#### **2. Maternity, Early Years, Family**

- Explore potential to reduce home visits for maternal and child health
- Useful if families had access to an app that can access all information on line
  - early intervention services
  - vaccines and immunisation
  - after school programs for kids
- Many families experience social isolation
- Refugees/Migrants don't understand our systems and compulsory immunisation
- Coordination of after school programs for kids

#### **3. Youth Services**

- Increasing number of kids not attending school – but have phones
- Kids are creating own communities on the net
- Kids no longer recipients but producers of content and information
- Average teenager knows more about IT than their teachers
- Council could use ICT to give local youth a voice
- There is a physical, cultural and economic divide between youth groups
- Huge opportunity for local online education, employment and training
- All Councils in region have the same youth issues – need to bring reports together
- Could provide local sports club common platform to communicate with members
- Level of programming skill unknown – probably follows traditional bell curve
- Most young people are adept at Facebook – the common social platform
- Increased disengagement from school system – perceived as not meeting needs
- When it comes to technology and software students are more literate than their teachers
- Anecdotally young people have limited access to internet from pc/laptop stations
- Access level to internet via smart phone technology is not well known

#### **4. Library**

- Council has a shortage of public facilities through which to access internet
- Libraries can play a greater role in educating people on IT/digital communications etc but they must be able to relinquish some obligations to make way for the new
- Possibility of libraries specialising
- Staff shortages – particularly technically savvy
- Currently have overload demand and usage of WiFi
- Lack of facilities means libraries struggle to cope with reducing digital divide
- Many good ideas for new service offerings but they do not assist libraries to reduce the digital divide
- Council lacks the budget for electronic readers (kindles etc)

#### **5. Intercultural Programs**

- Do not have access to technology so digital strategy may not help
- Programs and activities to engage different cultures and age groups
- Service a wide range of NESB stakeholders from the community
- Need case management to coordinate suppliers – particularly at public events

#### **6. Arts**

- Dynamic arts community – one of most active in Melbourne
- Significant content generation – from large scale creative community
- Can provide content to remote and distant communities
- Can provide information and opportunity to schools
- Use for music and film events
- Council could provide facility to collaborate nationally

#### **7. Information Technology**

- Use ICT to provide social services that others don't provide
- Provide access to training that others don't provide
- Examine tele-work options from hub centre (ie: NAB workers)
- Limit commuting time, keep spending local
- Provide more internet connections to community/library service
- Host video conferencing for online education
- On line books and e-audio – licenses problem
- Digital Strategy can work now – technology is already here
- Examine unified data/hosting across the region
- Needs to be financially affordable to be sustainable
- Charging services to other councils outside region

#### **8. Council Organisational Efficiencies**

- Digital Strategy will have resource implications and result in process improvement and change – difficult to measure what this will be
- Will need to manage process re-engineering that will follow from change
- How to cope with residents who are not included in NBN roll out, introduce a levy or charge?
- Applying a small charge could help achieve social equality
- Establish collaborative structures in the municipality
- How would we get small business to use structures we create?

**9. Corporate Communications**

- Use e-Government to make Darebin more transparent
- Greater community access could reduce the digital disadvantage
- More e-transactions to cope with will increase resource limitations
- Take Council meetings on-line
- Use technology to assist with the cultural and language diversity

**10. Injury Management**

- Need better on line system to monitor injured workers return to work – there are OH&S implications if not properly managed
- Darebin currently trialling on-line OH&S system – only council in region doing so
- System could provide online reporting of incidents
- Goal to minimise injury on council land, buildings, workplaces

**11. Finance**

- People struggle to make payments to council
- Older residents struggle to understand
- Council finance officers spend huge amount of time on phone to elderly/family to explain meals on wheels
- Bigger problems explaining to NESB residents

**12. Strategic Planning**

- Need to begin scoping ability of developments to include NBN
- Digital economy ubiquitousness will change behaviours – impact on planning
- Will have an impact on transport – needs to be factored into future planning
- Need to get use to more mixed development

**13. Waste Services**

- Digital Strategy could impact waste services – better monitoring of collections

**14. City Works**

- Provide access to people to raise road opening permits on-line
- Use sensors to monitor garbage truck movements and safe weights
- Use more mobile computing and limit field re-work
- Improve communications in an emergency
- Emergency recovery may be a problem as nearby building not suited

**15. Emergency services**

- Major problem – council emergency workers on duty after hours unable to connect back into systems after hours

**16. Commercial Arts - Creative**

- Marketplace – vacant space available
- Can kick start the website and manage the business
- Get young people opportunity to work up designs for apps
- Micro grants of \$5k to \$10k for small projects

**17. Not for Profit - Seniors**

- Lack of access to space – need to know what is available
- Willing to use co-working spaces with micro business – helps wellbeing
- Need access to technology

### 18. Small Business

- Small technology companies use cheap offshore services (ie India)
- Major lack of funding options for first 6 months of commercialisation
- Access to business support programs too difficult – bureaucratic babble
- Government business programs designed to limit access because got no money – takes months to get through the process - by then the business opportunity is gone
- Need small programs more relevant to micro businesses
- Inspire 9 – co-working centre/incubator works quite well
- Need access to angel investor – venture capital
- Access to drop in desk - \$500 week – by hour/day helpful
- Submission writing is problem – stand and deliver style tendering does not work as most small/micro are just not good at filling bureaucratic babble forms
- Council assistance with writing submissions helpful
- Need a local roundtable to share knowledge
- Relationship business (and job seeking) better than transactional
- “SEEK” is a waste of time for most jobseekers

### 19. Employment

- Local database advantage to local jobseekers
- Faster assistance and help with job applications
- Cut down on time to sift through jobs and candidates for jobs
- Reduce need to travel
- Common system that locals can use

Note: <sup>1</sup> U3A provides older residents with information, access and support to participate in lifelong learning and develop new skills through education including technology literacy and proficiency with use of the Internet.

