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MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Telework Week to showcase benefits of working from home

The Australian Government wants more employers and employees to reap the many social, economic and environmental benefits of telework, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, said today.

Announcing Australia's first National Telework Week that will be staged in November, Senator Conroy said the opportunities presented by increased telework were exciting for both employers and employees.

"An increase in telework can lead to benefits across the economy and community, from big business through to individual workers and families as well as the environment," Senator Conroy said.

"These benefits include cost-savings and productivity gains, increased workforce flexibility, expanded supply of skilled labour, reduced impact on the environment, reduced stress from traffic congestion and increased time available to spend with family and the community.

"For our next generation of employers and workers, IT connectivity will need to be seamless to allow work from any location, be it at home, in the office or at their local cafe.

"The rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) is the game changer that will make this an everyday reality for Australians wherever they live."

National Telework Week will be convened by the Australian Government in partnership with a range of organisations and its purpose will be to encourage as many employers and employees as possible to trial teleworking.

Senator Conroy said the NBN would also assist in increasing Australia's level of telework.

"The NBN will allow Australians to interact more easily from home with their workplaces and with clients through high-definition multi-party video conferencing. They will be able to quickly transfer large files and use real-time collaborative business tools," he said.

"Australia currently lags well behind the leading nations for telework rates and the Government, in our Digital Economy Strategy, has set a goal to double Australia's telework rate by 2020.

"Cultural barriers by employees and employers are some of the factors contributing to our poor telework rates, so it is important to address those through education and awareness of telework's benefits."

Initial partners in National Telework Week include the Australian Human Resources Institute, Australian Industry Group (AIG), Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA), the Australian Network for Disability and the Local Government Managers Australia. Cisco, the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Unity4, Telstra, Blackberry, Polycom, Infrastructure Australia and the Green Building Council of Australia have also agreed to become partners.

Broadband Champion, Jon Dee, Managing Director of advocacy group Do Something!, said teleworking could have a tangible benefit on the environment, particularly air quality.

“I look forward to more teleworking reducing traffic pollution in Australia’s major cities. Fewer cars commuting daily will bring a range of environmental and health benefits as well as reduce the economic cost of congestion,” Mr Dee said.

Mr Andrew Stevens, Managing Director of IBM Australia and New Zealand, said that during the past decade IBM had fostered a culture of flexibility.

“Flexibility is a core part of IBM's retention and engagement strategy for all employees. Telework is viewed as an important aspect of that flexibility, a positive work choice with individual, team, organisation and client benefits,” Mr Stevens said.

Cisco Systems’ Vice-President Asia Pacific, Mr Les Williamson, said Cisco was reaping the cost-saving, productivity, work life balance and environmental benefits that telework delivers.

“The future workplace is in the home and the ongoing rollout of high speed broadband will allow more employers and their employees to experience telework, regardless of their size or their business,” he said.

Philip Cronin, General Manager of Intel Australia & New Zealand, said ubiquitous and affordable high-speed broadband would mean many Australian workers will have the potential to become just as effective at home as they are in the office.

“Teleworking has the potential to save Australian businesses millions of dollars, offer greater flexibility to the workforce and open up new job opportunities for rural and regional communities,” he said.

Registrants will receive regular updates on preparations for National Telework Week which will also be posted to the website LinkedIn (search for Telework2020). Discussion on Twitter will use the hashtag #telework2020.

Organisations interested in partnering with the Australian Government to promote telework are encouraged to make contact via telework@dbcde.gov.au. For more information on telework visit www.nbn.gov.au/telework

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