

# Netspots: finding the nearest access point



At no time in the past has portable computing been this convenient, reliable and affordable. But despite this, there is a very real and tangible cost to portable computing, both financial and physical.

Not everyone can afford the myriad of devices to fit all their needs and situations nor that one super device that is the Swiss army knife of the computing world. Not everyone likes to be burdened with carrying or even the responsibility for these portable devices.

Is there an alternative? What about public internet access? Public Internet Access is a location that provides access to the internet either for free or for a charge.

Take a walk on Mitchell Street, Smith Street or even Cavenagh Street and you will see people sitting down face-to-face with a computer screen probably reading email through Hotmail or any one of a number of free email providers. I am sure you have all seen them, and I am equally sure some of you probably think that they are just for backpacking tourists.

But I say they can provide a real and useful alternative to the professional on the go and at the same time not burden you down with the extras that go with portable computing.

Whether free or for a charge public internet access allows you to send and receive email and other documents and use the internet.

What is the difference between a public access point and a hotel's business center or even the business center found in airport lounges like Qantas Club? Nothing – Okay perhaps the person sitting next to you won't be wearing reef sandals if you are in a hotel business center, but the principle is the same.

Access to the internet allows you do the things you would normally do. You can access the firm's intranet, you can check you email, you can use online banking, you can undertake research.

Assuming that you can see the potential the obvious question is where are all the public internet access points? Wouldn't it be good if you could find the nearest access point to where you will be when you travel interstate?

Well you can.

The National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) has created Netspots Directory ([www.noie.gov.au/netspots/](http://www.noie.gov.au/netspots/)). Netspots has been developed to enable people to find their nearest public internet access facility in Australia.

Netspots lists both free and charged facilities and contains specific information for each location.

Listings in the Directory contain contact details, type of facility, number of computers, hours of operation, services available with the internet and physical accessibility.

Simple to use you can search on a range of criteria including state, name, type of facility (eg internet café, library etc), suburb and postcode.

The Netspot Directory is free to use and provides public access internet providers to submit, add or amend their details on line. The Netspots site also offers another free service in the form of a directory of video conferencing facilities.

While this facility is simply an alphabetical listing, it does provide a simple way of finding video conferencing facilities.

#### Links in this article:

Netspots - [www.noie.gov.au/netspots/](http://www.noie.gov.au/netspots/)

National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) - [www.noie.gov.au](http://www.noie.gov.au)

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if there is a location order made by the Family Court or the matter involves a prosecution for a social security or family assistance law offence.

Of course, if the subpoena is for information from a Centrelink staff member's personnel file (for example, if the staff member has a personal injury claim), Centrelink has the same obligations as any employer and would generally comply.

In most other situations, the Act requires Centrelink to resist subpoenas. This is so that customer information remains confidential. In *Piras v Thaisawat* (1993) 115 FLR 79 O'Rourke J of the Family Court set aside a subpoena addressed to the then Department of Social Security, ruling

that the secrecy provisions of the Act were a valid basis on which to object to producing documents. The Judge in that case cited with approval the reasoning in the case of *In the Marriage of Thompson* [1990] 102 FLR 19.

Practitioners are also advised that in many cases where Centrelink has been required to attend Court to resist a subpoena, Centrelink has also been successful in obtaining an order for costs. There have been instances where the costs order has been made against a solicitor personally.

Practitioners acting for the client whose information is sought will usually be able to get what is required, with the client's permission.

For more information, contact Rick McQuinlan on 07 3000 3484. ①