



PUBLIC LIBRARIES DEVELOP A TASTE FOR THE NBN

Susan Coker, Executive Manager of CityLibraries Townsville introduces Colin Kay of Kay Brothers Amery Vineyards via videoconference.

A winemaker, two public libraries, some willing wine swillers and the National Broadband Network (NBN) came together last year to test whether Australia's new superfast broadband network could help public libraries to not only overcome the logistics of distance, but also provide a platform on which libraries can build rich, engaging and enjoyable community events and programs, no matter how far the distance between the program presenter and the audience.

The NBN promises an affordable telecommunications infrastructure that will allow Australians to access information, work and learning opportunities, and health services from wherever they live and work in the country. Some public libraries have been connected to the NBN for over two years, and have been recipients of Digital Hubs funding from the federal government, which has provided connections to the NBN, high-end video-conferencing equipment, public computers and a range of training opportunities for the communities these public libraries serve. The City of Onkaparinga Libraries (SA) and CityLibraries Townsville (QLD) are two such libraries who decided to use this new equipment and connectivity to introduce face to face connections between people, although the libraries are nearly 2,000km apart.

The virtual wine tasting at CityLibraries Townsville was a great way to launch May as the Month of Learning in 2013. Managing Director of Kay Brothers Amery Vineyards Colin Kay led the tasting of a range of Kay Brothers wines from the Willunga Digital Hub in South Australia via the NBN.

Participants were given the chance to learn about the sensory examination and evaluation of wine from an expert South Australian winemaker. The NBN provided an opportunity for Townsville residents to experience South Australian wines and gain some understanding of their qualities from the comfort of the library lounge, overcoming the challenges that often restrict the range of learning opportunities available to North Queensland residents.

The virtual wine tasting was an Australian NBN first and it demonstrates that the potential for the NBN is immense, not just for unique events like this, but more broadly for a huge range of education and information sharing opportunities with people across the country. It's exciting to think we can now connect with people around Australia with such speed and connection quality, enjoying a richer communication experience where we can see each other and show exactly what we're talking about.

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