

Radio Days – 2010-08-14

Tip of the Week – Computers Crashing

Are you the frustrated owner of a computer which keeps crashing when you do any serious work with it? Does your computer work perfectly when somebody else browses the internet or writes a letter or two but crash when you want to edit large photos or videos? The problem might well be with your computer's power supply.

Your computer's power supply is a small box, usually at the top rear of your computer, into which you plug the mains power. It converts 240 volt AC from the wall outlet into three DC voltages. It is designed to supply a certain maximum amount of power to the insides of your computer and, if it gets too close to that maximum, it will start to do strange things. These strange things include shutting your computer down at apparently random times, and usually at the best time to frustrate you badly. This is called *Murphy's Law*.

The solution to your problem is simple: install a power supply with sufficient "room for toes to grow" so that there is ample headroom (or toe-room) to provide all the electrical power which your computer needs. A computer with a power supply which too small is like a person who is expected to work on an empty stomach!

National Broadband Network

One of the big issues in this election is whether the NBN will be kept in its present form or whether it will be junked in favour of a cheaper, slower alternative. My preferred option is to keep the NBN in its present form. There are those who argue that it will be outdated before it is finished, but this is true of all electronic devices and services. Your last computer was obsolete before you took it out of the shop, but that did not stop you from buying it.

The NBN and computers have much in common: they can both be updated. Many people buy a new computer when their old one gets too slow, but the NBN is designed to be upgraded as new technology becomes available. The original statement from Senator Conroy stated that the NBN would have a speed of 100 Mbps: this is now expected to increase by a factor of ten to become 1 Gbps. This speed is seriously fast and will take Australia into the forefront of the internet age when it is completed.

Many people wonder why this sort of speed is necessary. There are some, like one of my brothers, who would be much happier if the world went no faster than a walking horse. There are others who want to go as fast as they can, and for them a freeway is an invitation to speed. A fast broadband infrastructure is the electronic equivalent of a new fast freeway: it enables all sorts of other activities.

Many people today are doing jobs which had not even been thought of when they were born. People born today will need the sort of enabling technology which a fast broadband network can supply to do tomorrow's jobs, which also have not been discovered.

The network which we build today will, like everything, degrade over time. Just as our roads need continuing maintenance so this new network will need continuing maintenance. The technology will also improve as time goes on: this continual improvement in technology is no reason not to build the technology in the first place.

Imagine if nobody had bought Henry Ford's Model A. No roads would be built so, when people were ready to buy a new car, we would all have been driving on rutted dirt tracks more suited to a walking horse. Is this progress?

Websites

None this week