



About Infoxchange Australia

Technology for social justice

At **Infoxchange Australia**, we like to imagine a world where everyone, everywhere has equal access to information communication technology (ICT).

We're working to make this happen in lots of different ways.

Our work for disadvantaged individuals and the community sector includes:

- » providing affordable computers,
- » establishing and maintaining internet connections, help desk and technical support services
- » delivering multimedia and web-design services
- » providing ICT, professional development and certified training courses creating employment opportunities
- » developing online information and community-service directories
- » facilitating networking and coordination between community-service organisations
- » creating employment opportunities for people in the IT industry
- » delivering social-enterprise projects to strengthen community capacity.

We believe in the value of using technology to foster social justice. Our mission is to create social equality and opportunity by empowering people through access to ICT and enabling the exchange of information and ideas.

Infoxchange Australia currently employs over 70 people and provides services around Australia and in a number of Asia-Pacific countries.

'We believe in the value of using technology to foster social justice. Our mission is to create social equality and opportunity by empowering people through access to information communication technology and enabling the exchange of information and ideas.'

'Civil and democratic societies demand that everyone be able to access and share information. In the 20th century, this meant being able to read and have access to print materials, radio and television. In the 21st century, it means having access to information communication technologies; it means digital inclusion.'

Andrew Mahar,
Founder and Executive Director
Infoxchange Australia

Our history

Infoxchange Australia was born as an idea in 1988: 'Why not use a computer database to list bed vacancies for people in need?'

At the time, Andrew Mahar, founder and now Executive Director of Infoxchange Australia, was working with homeless people on the streets of Melbourne and becoming frustrated with the inefficient and time-consuming process of finding housing for disadvantaged people.

A visionary idea

No centralised directory of accommodation vacancies existed. However, a new technology was emerging that allowed instant entry or removal of vacancies and democratic access to the information. No gatekeepers, and equal access for all.

This was technology for social justice.

Andrew and the Inner Urban Regional Housing Council applied for a social-justice grant and were awarded \$2500 to study the idea. By then, the Accommodation Vacancy Register had become so successful that the idea was extended to include a community support services directory with other services such as health, employment, counselling and mediation, education, and drug and alcohol services. By the end of 1995, over 700 people were registered on the Accommodation Vacancy Register and the service directory contained information on over 12,000 services. Infoxchange Australia was beginning to fulfill its vision of technology for social justice.

Service Seeker

In 1996 the original accommodation vacancy register and community support services directory became an internet database. And Infoxchange Australia, facilitated the expansion of the Victorian community health and welfare services directory to 100,000 records. Known as the Service Seeker, it was the largest directory of its kind in the nation. It has since expanded to all Australian states and territories and now holds over 215,000 records nationwide. Infoxchange Australia has developed beyond providing community-services databases to become an internet service provider, a web designer, a community-development resource and a trainer in ICT.

Our mission

Infoxchange Australia fulfils its mission to use technology for social justice through the pursuit of the following two main themes:

1. Bridging the digital divide that separates those with access to computer or digital technology and those without.

The digital divide separates the information-rich from the information-poor. Infoxchange Australia developed the social enterprise programs Green PC and Grassroots to break down this divide.

2. Community empowerment that encourages a whole-of-community approach to the provision of health, welfare and community support services.

Our initiatives: now and in the future

Since 1989, **Infoxchange Australia** has delivered projects that use ICT as a tool to create positive social change:

- » **Service Seeker** is Australia's first electronically searchable directory of health and welfare services. It now contains information on over 215,000 community services across the country.
- » **Green PC** upgrades donated computers and sells them at affordable prices to low-income earners and community organisations. Green PC helps bridge the digital divide by allowing everyone equal access to technology.
- » Our **Service-to-Service (S2S)** suite improves service coordination and allows efficient, secure interaction between professionals in the health and welfare sectors. It includes electronic referral, respite-care coordination and case-management services.
- » Our **Grassroots** initiative supports projects that result in a more inclusive society. Info Timor is an example of a Grassroots initiative. Info Timor is an ICT social enterprise run by East Timorese people for East Timorese people. Donated computers are upgraded and redistributed as a sustainable business enterprise, providing a significant contribution to economic, social and educational development in this new nation.
- » Our **Web and Multimedia** team designs, develops and hosts websites for community and not-for-profit organisations. A key part of our Web and Multimedia service is producing infocasts (electronic newsletters) in the areas of community, health, youth and wired news.
- » Our **ICT services** provide online communications, help-desk and support, technical advice and networking services to non-profit and community organisations. Our team provides a holistic, responsive, quality and cost-effective service.
- » **Training programs**, including nationally accredited certificates, are available in information technology and other subject areas.

Our achievements

National and international awards recognise our achievements in creating positive social change.

The Bulletin magazine's Smart 100

Infoxchange Australia founder and Executive Director Andrew Mahar was recognised as one of *The Bulletin* magazine's 'Smart 100' in 2007. The Smart 100 acknowledges Australia's smartest, most creative and most innovative people. Andrew was nominated in the 'Society' category for helping to increase access to ICT for the disadvantaged.

Stockholm Challenge Award

Infoxchange Australia was recognised with a prestigious Stockholm Challenge Award in the year 2000. The award showcases pioneering ICT projects from around the world.

The jury described the Infoxchange Australia entry as a first-class example of how ICT can be used in a new and innovative way. Stockholm Challenge judges look for projects that show in practice how ICT can be applied to social-welfare and healthcare programs, or as a tool in support of democracy.

Infoxchange Australia was then nominated for the Stockholm Challenge Award in subsequent years:

- » In 2001, it was nominated for its 'Reach for the Clouds' community building project (now called eACE). This initiative provided people living in a disadvantaged community with computers in their own homes and training on how to access local public- and private-sector services.
- » In 2002, Green PC was nominated for seeking to bridge the digital divide by upgrading donated computers and selling them at affordable prices to people and community organisations with low incomes.
- » In 2003/04, the Infoxchange Australia Service Seeker was nominated as an outstanding example of an online community services directory. Many local governments, government departments and community networks use and rely on the Service Seeker directory.
- » In 2008, the Info Timor project was a finalist.
- » Infoxchange Australia is the only organisation in the history of the Stockholm Challenge to achieve this many nominations.

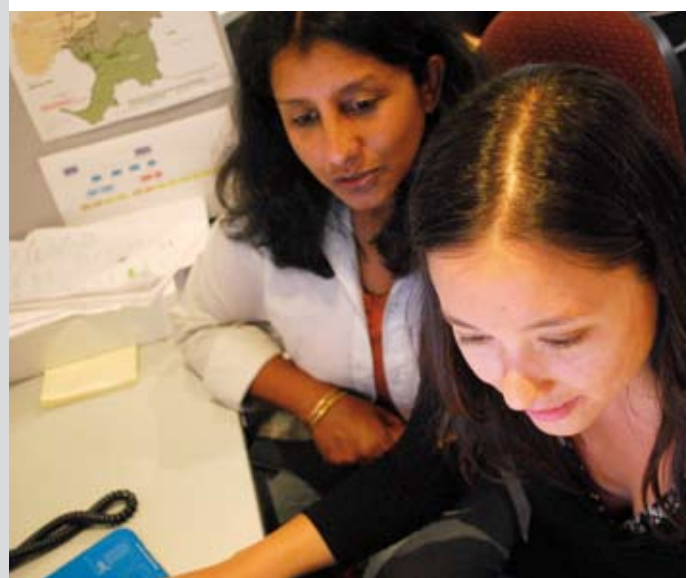
Atherton Gardens Australia Day Award

eACE (electronic Atherton Community Enterprise) is an Infoxchange Australia initiative offering ICT support to residents in Atherton Gardens, Victoria.

Infoxchange Australia won a 2006 Atherton Gardens Australia Day Award for the organisation most committed to promoting education and learning.

Hitwise Number 1

Infoxchange Australia was the most popular community website in Australia in 2003 and 2004, according to internet monitoring agency Hitwise. Infoxchange Australia won the 'Community' category of the Hitwise Australian Online Performance awards, as the most frequently visited community website in Australia.



www.infochange.net.au

Infochange Australia is a leading not-for-profit enterprise

Vision

Our vision is 'technology for social justice'.

Infochange Australia works towards a society where all those who wish to use new technologies have access to them.

We believe that informed people make change.

Mission

To create social equality and opportunity by empowering people through access to information communication technology and enabling the exchange of information and ideas.

Values

We value empowerment, integrity, innovation and excellence.

Infochange Australia

- » Works to bring the benefits of information communication technology to all, to address society's 'digital divide'
- » Utilises information communication technology to empower individuals and strengthen communities
- » Encourages cooperative partnerships and information sharing within and across government, community and private sectors

Infochange Australia initiatives and enterprises



More information

To find out more about Infochange Australia, contact us on (03) 9418 7400 or email info@infochange.net.au, or visit www.infochange.net.au



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