

Computer Upgrades

Think \$900 is not enough to buy a new computer? Maybe not but by upgrading an existing computer you can end up with a really good computer without spending too much money.

So why not use you \$900 stimulus payment to upgrade your current computer?

When upgrading your computer the first things you should improve are the motherboard, which is the part that everything inside the tower connects to, the central processing unit (CPU) which is the brain of the computer that tells everything what to do and the random access memory (RAM) which is where everything is temporarily stored while it's in use.

Depending on how old your tower is you should also consider upgrading your power supply unit, as some newer CPUs and motherboards need a larger power supply. Other parts you could upgrade are the hard drive or a DVD drive, as a lot of things are now produced on DVD rather the CD. You should also consider upgrading from an IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics/ Parallel ATA) connection which connects the hard drive or CD/DVD drive to the motherboard by a ribbon cable, to SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) which is quicker due to a different wiring configuration. This allows files to transfer more quickly, which is useful when installing or copying files as nowadays files sizes are very large.

If you are using windows 2000 or an earlier operating system you may want to upgrade to Windows XP or Vista. Since Microsoft is no longer making copies of XP it has gone up in price and you may find it increasingly difficult to purchase. Vista Service Pack 1 has now been release making Vista more secure. Vista has become easier to use since it is now supported on more hardware than it used to be. Vista is the way of the future and it is the recommended operating system.

Cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors display their pictures using a vacuum tube containing a source of electrons and a florescent screen. These monitors are big and bulky and take up a lot of space on your desk. Liquid crystal display (LCD) monitors show their picture by

reflecting light through liquid crystals, are slim line and don't take up as much space as CRT monitors. LCDs are more energy efficient and cause less eye fatigue than conventional monitors.

Printers have become very affordable. You can purchase a basic printer for around \$50 and it will be suitable for the average home user. The problem with cheap printers is the inks are often expensive. In some cases you will pay more for the inks than you did for the printer. When buying a printer it is a good idea to purchase a printer with the most affordable inks rather than just purchasing the most affordable printer. All-in-one printers that scan, photocopy, print and fax are becoming cheaper. These are ideal for a home office if you only have space for one machine. In addition you only have to buy one set of inks.

Laptops are becoming increasingly popular as you can take them when you are travelling. With a laptop and a wireless modem you can have the internet anywhere with mobile phone coverage. Prepaid wireless modems are available from \$149 from Telstra. Depending on your requirements you can buy new laptops from about \$500. Laptops can be purchased with Windows XP. Some of the Vista laptops come with a downgrade disc allowing you to also load Windows XP. This is because some people have a preference of Windows XP to Vista as that is what they are used to. Vista with Service Pack 1 is secure and most things are now compatible with Vista.

To organise an upgrade to your computer to improve its functionality, or just to escape the cold of winter in the new building with efficient heating drop in and see Josh at the Grenfell Internet Centre in the Community Hub Building or by phoning 6343 1720.