



Coonan will lead IT trade tour of India

Mark Jones

Communications Minister Helen Coonan has signalled the government's intention to promote greater ties with India's technology and film sectors with a high level delegation to visit the subcontinent this month.

Senator Coonan's predecessor, Richard Alston, led a delegation to the booming technology region in December 2000.

There have been in a string of government delegations to India in recent years, including former NSW premier Bob Carr's in November last year, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie's visit in September 2004, Victorian Premier Steve Bracks's trip in April this year and Victorian ICT Minister Marsha Thomson's November 2004 visit.

A spokeswoman for Senator Coonan said the itinerary and the number of participants were still to be finalised, but the trip – not yet officially announced – was designed to “promote international trade and business linkages, particularly for Australian ICT and digital content companies”.

Planned destinations include New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. Austrade has offered to arrange meetings in those cities and elsewhere in India between Australian technology executives and local companies.

“It will also be seeking to promote Australian capabilities in film and post-production,” the spokeswoman said.

News of the trip comes as offshore outsourcing is high on the agendas of some of Australia's largest companies, such as the National Australia Bank and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

This reliance on offshore outsourcing has caused concern among some segments of the technology industry worried about

Continued page 29



Coonan to lead IT trade tour of India

From page 25

the loss of local jobs. The Australian Computer Society in September called for a national approach to develop an "onshore" strategy to limit this problem.

Under the ACS plan, backed by research conducted by Swamy and Associates, Australia needs to establish itself as a destination for high-value analysis work known as knowledge process outsourcing, or KPO.

The KPO sector is predicted to be worth \$US16 billion (\$21 billion) by 2010 as companies now reliant on outsourced software development work evolve and look for additional analysis work to be conducted in economically stable, highly skilled countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom.

The trip's broad agenda appears designed to accommodate the debate, with Senator Coonan's department widely circulating invitations to join the delegation. It is planned for October 20 to 28.

According to the invitation, the minister will

"Senator Coonan's department has been widely circulating invitations to join the delegation."

meet leading Indian IT companies and is scheduled to visit the trade fair BangaloreIT between October 26 and 29. A number of Australian technology companies are understood to be exhibiting at the show.

Senator Coonan has also invited members of the technology industry to participate in a meeting to promote business relationships at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, ahead of the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi.

Australian Information Industry Association chief executive Rob Durie said it was likely that he would accompany Senator Coonan on the India trip, noting the AIIA already maintained a strong relationship with Indian IT association NASSCOM.

Mr Durie described Australian government interest in fostering ties with India as "the flavour of the last two years" and said the AIIA was positive about Senator Coonan's trip.

Outsourcing analyst Sri Annaswamy, founder and director of Swamy and Associates, said Senator Coonan should not overlook the KPO issue.

"It is the perfect opportunity for her to promote KPO to Australia as a knowledge processing hub for analysis functions," he said.

"Even the traditional [outsourcing] companies are looking to get into KPO."



Helen Coonan . . . promoting trade.

Photo: MAL FAIRCLOUGH