

affluent, industrialised nation (ranked in the top ten by the OECD), but much of its wealth derives from primary industry, particularly agriculture and mining.

The Commonwealth government has some responsibility for tertiary education and the national telecommunications infrastructure. Tertiary education, or post-school education comprises the university sector and the Technical and Further Education sector or TAFE (pronounced like safe). The States and Territories Governments have responsibility for the primary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) sectors.

2.2 DISTANCE LEARNING TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Much of modern distance learning is dependent on telecommunications. This section provides an overview of Australia's regulatory and operational telecommunication infrastructure.

2.2.1 Voice/Data Services

By world standards Australia has a highly developed voice and data telecommunications infrastructure, providing near-universal service for voice telephony and a wide range of advanced services. More than 95% of all Australian households have a standard telephone service. The Rural and Remote Areas Program (RRAP) has provided automatic telephone services to around 44,500 customers in the most remote areas of the country.

Recent changes in the Australian telecommunication environment are intended to reduce costs and improve services through competition and to make Australia a strong player on the world scene. The Asia Pacific region is an area of significant growth opportunities, marked by enormous telecommunications activity.