

ISPANZ POSITION PAPER

GIGABIT PER SECOND CONNECTIONS

Local fibre companies (LFCs) are extending one gigabit per second (1 Gbps) residential and SME business fibre broadband services across their fibre networks. ISPANZ welcomes 1 Gbps connectivity becoming widely available, but urges some caution in their promotion. Customer expectations of 1 Gbps connections need to be realistic. We all remember how Telecom's early statements about data speeds achievable over ADSL set high customer expectations that had to be wound back until no specific speeds were mentioned at all. The principle remains the same. Whilst any one 1 Gbps connection may theoretically be capable of delivering 1 Gbps, what customers actually experience will depend on the capability of their provider's network, the concurrent data demands of other users and the capability of the internet between the customer and the sites that they are connecting to. Just as they did when 200 Mbps connections became available, the first thing a customer with a new 1 Gbps connection will do will be to run a speed test – and the result will be less than 1 Gbps. It is important to understand that LFCs' customers are the ISPs who use LFCs' networks to deliver services to end-customers. The LFCs themselves are unable to promise connectivity speeds to end-customers. For them to state that users will be 'downloading 25 MP3 songs in a second' is potentially misleading and will set unrealisable customer expectations."

For ISPs to deliver a gigabit broadband service to their end-customers, their own networks have to be able to support the increased speeds and, in most cases, this will require upgrading hand-over ports. Currently (2016) most regional ISPs are using 1 Gbps hand-over ports, which would be flooded by a single 1 Gbps customer. Even a 10 Gbps hand-over port could be flooded by a small number of 1 Gbps customers. ISPs must also upgrade other network infrastructure to support these faster data rates, and that all costs money. It will take time and some significant investment to enable all ISPs to deliver the benefits of gigabit per second connectivity to their end-customers.