

## HALF OF ALL EMAIL IS NOW SPAM



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# Howard talks the IT talk in his own silicon suburb

Technology issues may be on the Prime Minister's mind come election time, writes **Beverley Head**.

Overlay the electoral boundaries of Bennelong with the IT&T sector, and it is clear that the Prime Minister's electorate is the closest thing Australia has to a silicon valley.

However, unlike its US counterpart, which was homegrown, Australia's silicon suburb is populated largely by international giants — with companies such as Microsoft, Lucent, Fujitsu, Siemens, Oracle and HP dominating the skyline and acting as the big job-engines for the area.

With these companies acting as anchors, and with the additional lure of Macquarie University, several CSIRO divisions and the establishment of technology parks in the electorate, smaller indigenous IT&T companies have

migrated to hang out their shingles in Bennelong also.

Small and medium enterprises have also carved a niche but the domination of the big international companies has become more concentrated since Howard became Prime Minister.

Representing Bennelong since 1974, Howard was sworn in as Prime Minister in 1996, when locally produced IT&T exports were growing by 12 per cent a year.

But through the past five years such exports have dropped 9.5 per cent a year, according to the Australian ICT Trade Update released by the Australian Computer Society last month.

In addition Australia's IT&T trade deficit has ballooned from \$9.5 billion in 1996-97, when Howard became PM, to \$14.4 billion in 2002-03, according to Professor John Houghton, author of the report.

Yet despite the foreign IT companies' apparent victory in the trade wars, Howard is firm

that small and medium local IT companies remain an important element of the Bennelong landscape.

Opening new offices in North Ryde for local IT companies marketboomer and FulfilNet last month, Howard was keen to stress the importance of small and medium enterprises both to the Bennelong electorate and the broader Australian economy.

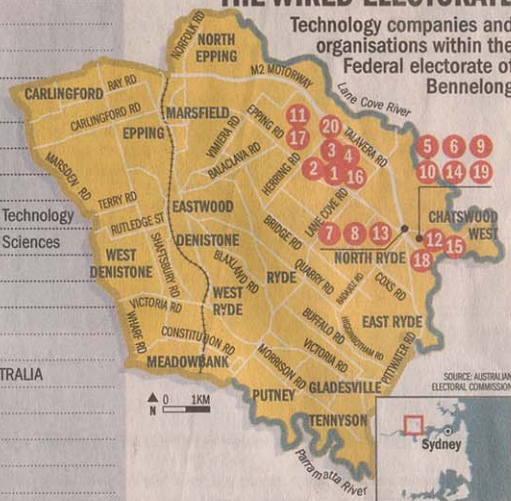
Noting that "this is a good time to do business in Australia", Howard said the country was enjoying its 12th consecutive year of unbroken economic growth and benefited from an enormous and diversified export base, and from having a population that had harnessed information technologies and telecommunications effectively.

"There is no such thing as an old economy or a new economy, but companies in economies which combine the best of technology with plain, old-fashioned people skills," Howard said.

- 1 AUTODESK AUSTRALIA
- 2 LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES AUSTRALIA
- 3 BELL LABORATORIES (AUSTRALIA)
- 4 CITRIX SYSTEMS
- 5 CSIRO Business Development & Commercialisation
- 6 CSIRO Energy Technology
- 7 CSIRO Exploration & Mining
- 8 CSIRO Food Science Australia
- 9 CSIRO Manufacturing & Infrastructure Technology
- 10 CSIRO Mathematical and Information Sciences
- 11 CSIRO Molecular Science
- 12 CSIRO Petroleum Resources
- 13 FUJITSU AUSTRALIA
- 14 HEWLETT-PACKARD
- 15 MARKETBOOMER and FULFILNET AUSTRALIA
- 16 MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
- 17 MICROSOFT
- 18 ORACLE SYSTEMS
- 19 SIEMENS
- 20 TREND MICRO AUSTRALIA

## THE WIRED ELECTORATE

Technology companies and organisations within the Federal electorate of Bennelong



CONTINUED PAGE 2