21ST CENTURY STUDY

Broadband speed big factor

STUDENTS produce higher-quality work with access to high-speed broadband as part of their schooling, according to a study.

The report, 21st Century Teaching Strategies for a Highly Connected World, drew on the experiences of 60 teachers at three schools connected to the national broadband network (NBN).

The schools were PLC Armidale, the TAFE teacher training institute at Armidale, and Willunga High School in South Australia.

"Students who used to hand in C-grade work are now producing A-grade work." Willunga High School principal Janelle Reimann said.

The three-month study was conducted by educational consultant ideasLAB on behalf of the network’s builder, NBN Co.

The study found that 96 per cent of teachers believed the NBN would help students boost their quality of work and 86 per cent said access to super quick broadband would improve how lessons were delivered.

On the subject of learning, 96 per cent of teachers agreed the NBN will boost their own professional development and learning, and 89 per cent believed the network will allow students to engage in more ambitious inquiry-based projects.

Student and teachers were accessing new ways to learn through the broadband network.

This included history students studying at home while working with peers and teachers using the online community Edmodo, and science pupils connecting with university experts to watch the dissection of hearts by high definition video conferencing.

NBN co-general manager of education Kate Cornick said most Australian educators realised the importance of online learning, both at school and at home.

"The potential is extraordinary and it’s what we need if Australia is to remain globally relevant in the 21st Century," Cornick said.

Under Labor’s $37.4 billion plan, NBN Co is to deliver high-speed broadband optic fibre cable to 93 per cent of homes, schools and businesses by 2021. The rest will be supplied via fixed wireless and satellite services by 2015.