

Calit2 Wireless Traffic Report to Make its Australian Debut

September 18, 2009

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Traffic in the Land Down Under is about to become less of a headache thanks to a Web-based application first developed at the University of California, San Diego.

The California Wireless Traffic Report - the product of research and development conducted at UC San Diego's California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2) - has been licensed to the University of Queensland's (UQ) VisLab, which will use a customized version of the software to create a "traveler information system" for residents of Brisbane and other regions in the Australian state of Queensland. The proof-of-concept prototype is funded by the Queensland Cyberinfrastructure Foundation (QCIF) and will allow motorists to get real-time information on traffic speeds and delays along the major highways they travel.

"The Brisbane Traffic Report will enable local commuters to make better informed decisions about when and where to drive," says Bernard Pailthorpe, chair of Computational Science at UQ as well as director of the VisLab and QCIF, and former associate director of scientific visualization at UCSD's San Diego Supercomputer Center. "It is a good example of how cyberinfrastructure can enable smarter use of established urban infrastructure (transport, water, energy, buildings). Such ICT-enabled smart infrastructure will be important element in reducing emissions as we respond to climate change."

In its current incarnation, the application delivers traffic information via several modalities: over voice, over the web and also as an iPhone application. Although the raw data for the San Diego app comes from Caltrans, data for the Australian version will come from sensors on roadways in Brisbane and beyond.

"We have provided them with core traffic system and they will be customizing it to their needs," says Ganz Chockalingam, the senior researcher at Calit2 who developed the technology. "They thought the app had all the bells and whistles they wanted - traffic alerts, daily reports, maps, personalization features - and for the VisLab, it made more sense to license our technology rather than build it from scratch."

The licensing agreement marks the latest partnership in a long line of collaborations between Calit2 and a number of Australian universities. Calit2 Director Larry Smarr has collaborated with Pailthorpe in the past on the National Science Foundation-funded OptIPuter project, an effort to use remote, high performance computers to advance science across many disciplines. In addition, Smarr spoke last year at nine Australian universities on "Coupling Australia's Researchers to the Global Innovation Economy," including the University of Adelaide, Monash University, the University of Sydney and UQ. Chockalingam says he's also keen to partner with UQ - and other interested parties - on licensing of the iPhone App version of his California Traffic Report. That application, which has been downloaded from Apple's App Store more than 30,000 times since its launch earlier this year, has already surpassed the Web-based version's 20,000 regular users and at one point made it to the first page of "Top Free" apps in the Travel section of the App store.

"The iPhone app usage surpassed the Web-based app numbers in six months," notes Chockalingam. "Lots of people have written to ask me about it, and the people in Australia want access to that software next."

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