

SmartHouse
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New Nav System Gives Heads Up On Traffic Jams

By David Richards

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A new wave of long overdue navigation technology that delivers real time information on traffic conditions is set to be rolled out in Australia. Already available in Europe, Japan and the USA the first service will be rolled out in Melbourne in 2007 and Sydney and Brisbane in 2008, providing the navigation device companies adopt the technology.

The Suna Traffic Channel developed by Intelomatics Australia, a subsidiary of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), will broadcast detailed information on traffic congestion and other road conditions directly to GPS navigation systems, in real-time.

According to Adam Game, the CEO of Intelomatics Australia, users can expect to pay an additional \$300 on top of their navigation system purchase price for lifelong access to the service.

Intelomatics has made SUNA available to Australia's navigation and automotive industries this week with several navigation system suppliers including Garmin and Mio currently reviewing the solution.

According to Adam Game, Melbourne was selected for the first service release, owing to the assistance of VicRoads and Melbourne's position as the hub for Australia's automotive industry.

SUNA will initially provide real-time traffic coverage across more than 75 percent of Australia's urban population and this will increase when the service is launched in Adelaide and Perth, later in 2008.

Although there is no panacea for rush-hour congestion, many of the worst delays motorists experience can be attributed to road works and unpredictable causes including accidents and signal failures. With SUNA, motorists are informed in real-time to avoid such delays.

"With the new SUNA Traffic Channel, drivers can now understand, anticipate and respond to changes in the traffic flow and road conditions surrounding them in real-time," said Adam Game, Chief Executive of Intelomatics Australia. "SUNA Traffic Channel is Australia's first digital traffic information broadcast and will operate 24 hours per day, all year round."

"The enormous popularity of similar services in Europe, Japan and North America suggests that motorists' value being informed in real-time about road conditions. Even the ability to estimate an accurate arrival time can be an enormous relief to motorists."

"SUNA is proudly an Australian innovation and based on technology used by millions of drivers worldwide, ensuring its compatibility with many of the navigation systems, already in use in Australia. With SUNA, drivers and passengers will have a safer and more enjoyable motoring experience through greater understanding and control over their surrounding road conditions," Game said.

Unique to SUNA is its ability to identify traffic congestion levels using data derived from traffic light control systems. SUNA Traffic Channel is the first TMC service in the world to apply technology which takes advantage of the data collected by tens of thousands of vehicle sensors driving modern traffic light control systems.

Through SUNA's sophisticated traffic prediction models and with cooperation by Australia's various State road authorities, this world-first approach has enabled the service to drill down to an extraordinary level of real-time detail.

SUNA will supplement the sensor-based data with information from probe vehicles deployed in known congested areas as well as live observation of road conditions by trained experts. The combined information is then broadcast in an encoded digital format via the FM frequency directly to compatible navigation devices.

SUNA is now being broadcast over 101.1FM in Melbourne and preliminary broadcasts have begun across 97.3FM in Brisbane and on 106.5FM in Sydney. Additionally, an online, XML-based feed of the SUNA Traffic Channel will be made available to developers and providers of internet-based traffic portals, smart phones and the logistics sector.

Traffic congestion is a major community issue.

The Bureau of Transport Economics (BTE) estimates that traffic delays in Melbourne cost the community around \$2.7 billion per year in additional travel time and resource wastage. In Sydney, an NRMA Survey in April 2007 found that 12 percent of small businesses in NSW have seen their annual operating costs increase by as much as \$20,000, through increased fuel consumption and operating costs as well as decreased staff punctuality and slowed-down productivity.

<http://www.smarthouse.com.au/Automotive/Navigation/J7U2S9W6?page=2>