Australia and its major corporations have much to gain from the changes commonly associated with the New Economy and are already well placed to do so. However, these gains will require a collective approach on the part of government and industry that will need to address not only policy and investment needs. There is also a need to constructively address community attitudes to change and the degree to which the benefits of economic and industry transformation are equitably shared.

**The New Economy**

I believe we are seeing the latest in a series of impacts from three broad trends — globalisation, major advances in computing and telecommunications technology, and deregulation of trade and financial markets. These trends have been influencing economic and business shifts throughout the past decade and this has led to much excitement about a new economic era. For me, the issue of Old Economy versus New Economy is less important than the issue of how rapidly countries and companies reap the benefits from globalisation, technology and deregulation.

Australia’s major banks are clearly in all these categories and are in the vanguard of industries benefiting from electronic commerce. The key point, however, is that all Australian consumers and all of our industries stand to benefit from the opportunities provided by electronic commerce and technology in general.

An issue for businesses is the need to align their strategies, structure and operating models with the demands of a fundamentally changed operating environment.

The momentum that has been generated by technology advances and the associated start-up of a new generation of companies will continue to build in Australia. Three broad categories of businesses stand to benefit:

- those that provide computing, telecommunications and systems technologies, as well as information content;
- those that can rapidly employ these technologies to improve their current processes and overall productivity; and
- those that both employ the technologies and also act as facilitators or intermediaries for the deployment of electronic commerce.

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