



PRODUCT OF THE YEAR 2005

COMMUNICATION PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

My Net Fone

It wasn't the first provider of residential VoIP services in Australia, but My Net Fone quickly became the best. Sold in a retail pack containing NetComm's V100LS analog telephone adaptor (ATA), it's easy to set up. Plug it into your broadband router and any standard telephone, and you'll quickly be saving money on your phone calls. Its call quality was consistently very good in our tests, with none of the voice lag associated with some software-based VoIP services. Best of all, its plans offer incredible value, with its MegaSaver plan, for example, including untimed calls anywhere in Australia for just 10c each and calls to the US and UK for 2.5c per minute.

Despite some stiff opposition, My Net Fone was the obvious choice as 'Communication Product of the Year'. But the big kahuna — the overall *PC User* 'Product of the Year'? That's a big call, so here's how we came to our verdict.

Obviously, with so many great products to choose from, we agonised over the decision. But even after stripping away all the hype, VoIP (short for 'voice over Internet Protocol') was the single most impressive and genuinely useful new technology to hit our homes during 2005. Yet it quickly moved beyond being a 'new' technology. Despite the fact that none of the big telecommunications companies

are offering residential VoIP, the better home VoIP providers are already offering remarkably mature, high-quality services.

VoIP is not without its traps. First, it's not as reliable as the good, old PSTN (public switched telephone network). A power blackout or Internet outage renders it useless. For this reason, you still need a standard PSTN phone line as backup (and also for ADSL broadband), which means you still have to pay line rental. Then you have to pay an additional monthly fee (\$9.95 in the case of My Net Fone's MegaSaver plan) to get a PSTN

phone number so people can call you. You need a decent broadband plan, too. Use VoIP on a budget plan with a 200MB download limit and penalty fees, and you'll see your phone savings (and more) disappear into your ISP's coffers.

So, you need to do your sums carefully to make sure your phone savings will outweigh the other costs involved with VoIP. Also be aware that if you make a 000 call via a VoIP service, emergency services can't automatically trace your address as they can with a PSTN call.

Despite this, VoIP is an impressive new technology that will deliver significant savings to many homes, and My Net Fone offers the best combination of value and quality of service.



PC COMPONENT MAKER OF THE YEAR 2005

Nvidia

This time two years ago, things weren't so pretty for Nvidia. It was one of the top two makers of graphics processing units (the all-important component in graphics cards for gamers), but it was getting beaten by ATI's GPUs in just about every price category. However, two years is a long time in computers, and now Nvidia dominates. Its GeForce 7800 GTX is the fastest GPU we've tested, its

7800 GT is the best midrange GPU and its 6600 GT is easily the best budget chip. Nvidia also makes excellent chipsets, the key component in motherboards. Take a motherboard with an Nvidia nForce4-SLI chipset, add one of AMD's latest Athlon 64 processors and one (or perhaps two) 7800 GTX graphics cards, and you'll have the fastest games system money can buy. 

