Australian Government

Department of Finance and Deregulation

David Tune PSM
Secretary

Our Ref: SEC0004501

Ms Sharon Bird MP
Committee Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bird

I am writing to you in response to the Committee's call for submissions into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network.

Information and communications technology is a critical enabler for government and its administration, governance and delivery of services to citizens and business. Communications technology underpins almost all ICT services. The Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance), through the Australian Government Information Management Office has a central role in leading change in the government communications environment.

Finance has considered the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and its submission focuses on the delivery of government services and programs through open engagement. A copy of Finance's submission is at <u>Attachment A</u> for your consideration.

Should you wish to discuss the content of our submission, please contact
Mr Glenn Archer, First Assistant Secretary, Policy and Planning Division on

Yours sincerely

David Tune
2f February 2011

Australian Government

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications: Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network

The Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) of the Department of Finance and Deregulation is pleased to respond to the Committee's invitation for submissions addressing the capacity of the National Broadband Network (NBN) to contribute to:

- the delivery of government services and programs; and
- the optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a critical enabler for government in its administration, governance and delivery of services to the Australian people, communities and business. Communications technology underpins almost all ICT services. AGIMO leads change in the government's use of communications technology through activities such as:

- managing the government's network services (ICON and Fedlink) and leading the Shared Communications Services Governance Committee;
- managing and supporting the national government portal, *australia.gov.au*[1];
- undertaking cross-jurisdictional work to create national frameworks to support e-government, including arrangements to secure online transactions for people and businesses;
- providing leadership consistent with the Government 2.0 Taskforce recommendations; and
- delivering whole-of-government ICT policies and strategies such as the *Cloud Computing Strategic Direction Paper (draft)*[2] and the *Whole-of-Government Tele-working Policy for ICT staff*[3].

Internationally, the 2010 United Nations e-government Survey ranks Australia first in Connected Services, second in its e-participation index, fifth in online service development and eighth in the world on its e-government development index overall. These ratings are based on governments' successful record in initiating, developing and delivering online services. The report noted the contribution of the australia.gov.au site as providing an "extensive national portal for Australia" which "helps citizens to navigate to key features, government initiatives, services and information".

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[1] Available online at *http://australia.gov.au/*

[2] *Cloud Computing Strategic Direction Paper.* January 2011. Available online at http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/strategy-and-governance/cloud-computing.html or http://tinyurl.com/4g4aaxk

[3] Available online at http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/strategy-and-governance/docs/Tele-working_Policy_for_ICT_Staff.pdf or http://tinyurl.com/6lcrw2w

AGIMO has conducted a number of studies into Australians' use and satisfaction with government services. The most recent of these studies, the December 2009 report *Interacting with Government*[4] concluded that "Internet use is now positioned as the main service delivery channel for Australians to interact with government." Since 2004, each subsequent study has shown an increase in the percentage of people who would prefer to contact government via the internet. Currently, when people contact the government by mail or in person, this is usually because there is no online option for that service.

The study found that many of those who did not prefer to contact the government via the internet could be encouraged to do so if the usability of online services was improved, they had access to the internet, or they had a higher skill level (Table 1). Greater broadband take-up across Australia through the roll out of the NBN will allow Government agencies to deliver online services based on wide spread broadband connectivity, and enable improvements in the quality of online services and usability.

The potential of the NBN enables agencies for the first time to plan for consistent online delivery to all Australians including those in regional and remote Australia. This is in contrast to current online services where there is a need to constrain the features of the service to reflect the significantly lower bandwidth typically available to citizens in regional and rural Australia.

Table 1: Preferred means of contacting government – what would encourage increased internet use

	Preferred channel of contact with government			
	Internet	Telephone	In person	Mail
	%	%	%	%
Proportion of people who prefer this channel	45	32	17	2
	Areas to be addressed for each group			
Usability	30	21	15	9
Better content and features	16	9	5	5
Infrastructure	7	6	6	6
Awareness	9	7	7	3
Cost	2	4	6	1
Security	1	3	3	0
Access	8	13	11	15
Customer service	3	3	2	3
Skill	2	11	13	12
Not interested	38	38	44	53

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[4] *Interacting with Government: Australians' use and satisfaction with e government services*. December 2009. Available online at http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/interacting-with-government-2009/index.html or http://tinyurl.com/6aalsru

The December 2009 report also found a strong correlation between broadband access and a person's preferred method of contacting government (Table 2). The study found that "those who have broadband connection are three times more likely to prefer to contact government by internet (54% compared with 16%). While just over a quarter (27%) of those who have broadband would prefer to contact by telephone, this rises to half (48%) among those without broadband. Those without a broadband connection are also more likely to prefer in person contact (30%) than those with broadband (13%)." The NBN will provide greater access to broadband and enable more people to access Government online services.

Table 2: Preferred service delivery channel and broadband connection
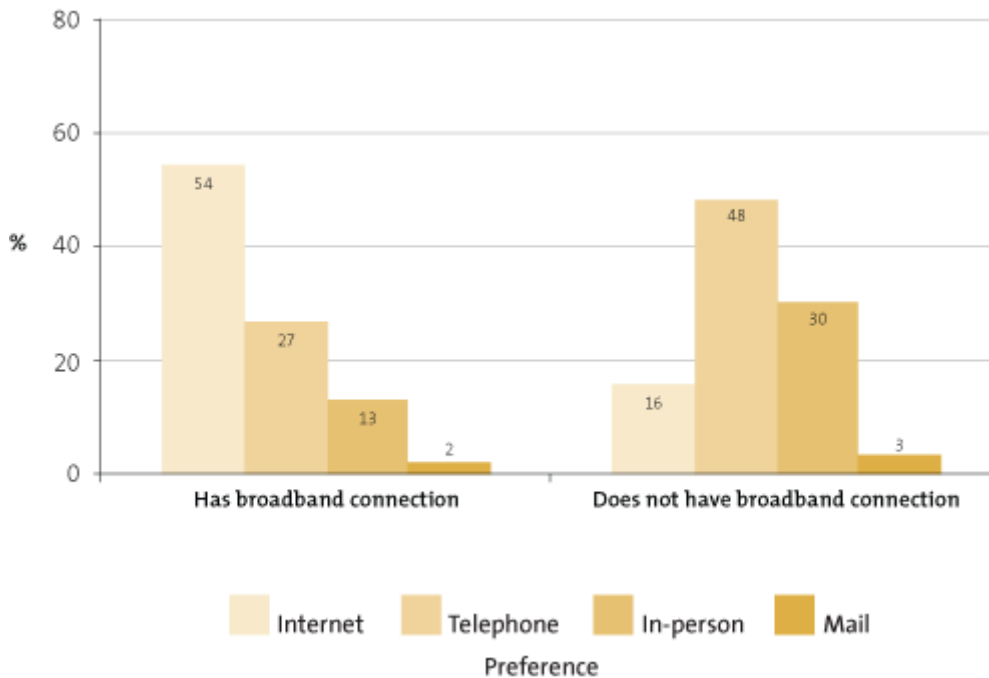
The growth in broadband connections has been greater than the growth in the number of respondents contacting the government by internet, demonstrating that there are current opportunities for government online services to expand and the services offered increased to reflect this new capacity. If we are to maximise the full potential of the NBN, we require a more consistent and coordinated approach to the development of service delivery, underpinned by continuous improvement of policy coordination and technical architecture.

The Government's response to the December 2009 report, *Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0*[5], and the July 2010 *Declaration of Open Government*[6] provide a framework for agencies to cohesively advance our current e-government services offerings. The framework encourages agency service design to incorporate Web 2.0 tools and techniques, such as online consultations; and communication technologies such as email, SMS, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing.

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[5] *Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0: Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce*. December 2009. Available online at http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/ or http://tinyurl.com/4n8fv4j

[6] *Declaration of Open Government*. July 2010. Available online at http://www.finance.gov.au/e-government/strategy-and-governance/gov2/declaration-of-open-government.html

This is supported by the December 2009 *Interacting with Government* study which found that people's use of other communication technologies such as email and text messaging is increasing, opening up greater options for the design of government services.

The delivery of computing technology is developing based on more ubiquitous access to broadband connectivity. This includes the growth of cloud computing which delivers technology as a service across broadband connections. Cloud computing provides opportunities to access technology at lower cost and more flexibly than traditional computing methods. The draft *Australian Government Cloud Computing Strategic Direction Paper* outlines the opportunities and risks that cloud computing provides for Australian Government agencies.

Agencies also need to have the necessary human capital and technical infrastructure to continue to deliver better government services. Pervasive broadband enables greater use of tele-working to engage ICT skills from diverse locations to support the delivery of services and government operations. Improved wide area network performance for Government agencies (that would be available through re-sellers of the NBN) distributed across the continent with better availability and capacity will improve Government services and the operation of agencies. This will also create opportunities to improve cross-agency processes and connectivity.