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**Contribution from Australia**

1. **Introduction**

Australia greatly appreciates the work of the Secretary-General and the Informal Experts Group (IEG) in preparing the key input document for the World Telecommunication Policy Forum 2013 (WTPF‑13). We particularly value the work of the various stakeholders in the IEG and their input into this ITU event and commend the move toward a multi-stakeholder approach. Australia wishes to put forward its views on two issues raised in the Secretary-General’s report in particular: 1) an enabling environment for the development of the Internet; and 2) the multi-stakeholder model for Internet governance.

1. **Creating an enabling environment for the development of the Internet**

Australia sees broadband as driving a fundamental transformation of the way we live and work, fostering online innovation and boosting productivity growth. The Internet itself is an enabling environment for a vast range of industries, as well as delivering social benefits at all levels of society. The Internet provides opportunities for new industries and services to emerge, and for existing ones to evolve. These opportunities are best realised by an open Internet that encourages innovation.

Australia supports enabling legal and regulatory environments that foster broadband connectivity, including competition, private sector investment and technology neutrality. Yet years of encouraging private sector investment and fostering competition in Australia resulted in an uneven quality of broadband deployment and competition across the country. The Australian experience was that the private sector was unable to fully meet Australia’s future telecommunications needs for a number of reasons, including our geography, population spread and the telecommunications incumbent’s dominant position. Therefore, given the particularities of the Australian experience, it is also recognised that broadband connectivity, depending on the national situation, may be best achieved through government intervention, including public sector investment.

The construction of Australia’s National Broadband Network (NBN), a next generation broadband network designed for Australia’s future needs, is the most significant telecommunications reform in Australia’s history. The NBN addresses the deficiencies identified in our situation through a long‑term government investment in a wholesale only, open access national broadband network being rolled out by NBN Co. The network will give all Australian homes and businesses access to high‑speed, affordable broadband through a mix of three technologies: fibre, fixed wireless and satellite[[1]](#footnote-1). It will create fairer infrastructure and greater retail competition in Australia, and will ensure that all of Australia has access to high‑speed broadband at competitive prices, with uniform national wholesale pricing around Australia. This will help to bridge the gap between regional and metropolitan areas of Australia.

The NBN will provide a platform that creates valuable opportunities to improve Australia’s capacity to respond to challenges in a range of sectors. The Australian Government has set eight goals that will help measure Australia’s progress in developing its digital economy, each of which is being pursued through targeted government initiatives. They include:

* *Smart management of the environment and infrastructure* – improved access to smart technologies to better manage energy use at home and in business to address environmental challenges caused by Australia’s growing population and highly urbanised population distribution.
* *Increased teleworking* to increase productivity, labour force participation and staff retention as well as create economic, social and environmental benefits.
* *Greater digital engagement in regional Australia*, so that the digital gap between cities and regional areas will become significantly narrower. Online connectivity is vitally important to regional and indigenous communities in Australia. It overcomes the distance barrier, which has traditionally prevented these communities from accessing the same benefits as households and businesses in metropolitan areas.

1. **The multi-stakeholder model for Internet governance**

The governance model for the Internet is vitally important. Australia supports the current multi‑stakeholder model of global Internet governance, and the role of ICANN in particular. The multi-stakeholder model brings together representatives from government, civil society, industry, non-government organisations, academia, and industry. Within this framework, stakeholders have different roles and responsibilities, but all stakeholders can provide input and have a voice in the continued evolution and growth of the Internet, based on their relevant expertise and viewpoints. The multi-stakeholder model has played a major role in the success of the Internet to date, and underpins its growth and development. The multi-stakeholder model is essential for ensuring that the Internet supports continued widespread online participation while remaining an enabler for innovation and a driver of economic growth. Australia considers that the best way of responding to the continual nature of change in this sector is through the multi-stakeholder process, recognising the varied and valuable contributions that all stakeholders can make to Internet governance. The Australian Government is working to strengthen and support the multi-stakeholder model. An important part of this work is to find ways to improve ICANN’s accountability, transparency and responsiveness to all stakeholders, including governments.

1. **Comments on the draft Opinions**

While reserving the right to put forward additional comments at the WTPF, Australia makes the following comments on the six draft Opinions agreed by the IEG.

1. Draft Opinion 1

Australia recognises the importance of promoting Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) as a means of advancing connectivity. The increase in use of public peering points and IXPs by Australian operators is understood to be one reason that international internet connectivity costs for Australian Internet Service Providers (ISPs) decreased in the past 15 years (other reasons were increased competition in the delivery of Internet traffic, and large reductions in transit and capacity costs). Given our experience, Australia supports encouraging the enhancement of competition and investment in the market, and creating the right conditions for IXPs to be created. Australia supports the adoption of draft Opinion 1 by WTPF.

1. Draft Opinion 2

As outlined above, Australia supports enabling legal and regulatory environments that foster broadband connectivity, including competition, private sector investment and technology neutrality. Australia supports the adoption of draft Opinion 2 in its current form, but also welcomes a discussion on whether the various decisions that national governments may make to suit their own circumstances could be better reflected in the Opinion.

1. Draft Opinions 3 and 4

Australia notes the significant similarities between draft Opinions 3 and 4, and suggests combining the two into one Opinion. This would improve the clarity of the agreement reached at WTPF on the deployment of IPv6 and transition from IPv4. Australia proposes that draft Opinion 3 should be used as the basis for the combined Opinion, since it is currently shorter.

1. Draft Opinion 5

As outlined above, Australia supports the current multi-stakeholder model of internet governance, and would support the adoption of draft Opinion 5.

1. Draft Opinion 6

Australia proposes combining draft Opinions 5 and 6, given the similar subject matter of the two. The focus of draft Opinion 6 is on the role of governments in responding to international internet‑related public policy issues, and this could be better reflected in draft Opinion 5.

1. See [www.nbn.gov.au](http://www.nbn.gov.au) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)