Australian Government's response to UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, October 2003.

Department of Communications, IT and the Arts (DCITA), January 2007

The UNESCO Recommendation covers:

1. **Development of multilingual content and systems**
2. **Facilitating Access to networks and services**
3. **Development of public domain content**
4. **Reaffirming the equitable balance between the interests of rights-holders and public interest**

The Australian Government through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts has some comments to make against these 4 parts of the UNESCO recommendation. UNESCO have asked member states to comment on their government's legislative or other measures and progress against these recommendations.

It should also be noted that the Australian Government participated actively in the World Summit on the Information Society in both phases of the Summit. In particular, it should be noted that the Australian Government lodged a comprehensive "stocktaking" report of its information economy and society initiatives at the World Summit on the Information Society, Phase II in Tunis in November 2005.

Much of the substance of these UNESCO recommendations has been incorporated into the outcomes of the WSIS. As a result this response draws heavily on much of the Australian Government's earlier reporting to WSIS from November 2005.

The follow on organisation from WSIS is now the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) which held its first meeting in Athens in 2006. Many of these issues are now also subject to discussion at the IGF. The Australian Government also continues to work on finding solutions to international issues covered by this UNESCO recommendation via its work in international organisations such as the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), and its Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC). The issue of Internationalised Domain Names or multilingual domain names is an example of this type of work.

1. Development of multilingual content and systems

Australia's multicultural history promotes acceptance of and respect for our cultural diversity. It embraces our Australian-grown customs and the heritage of Indigenous Australians, early settlers, and the diverse range of migrants now coming to this country. This encourages Australians to maintain and celebrate, within the law, their culture, language or religion.

Content regulation

To ensure the development of Australian media content, the Australian Broadcasting Services Act requires all commercial free-to-air television licensees to broadcast an annual minimum transmission quota of 55 per cent Australian programming between 6 am and midnight. In addition there are specific minimum annual sub-quotas for Australian (adult) drama, documentary and children's programs. There are also provisions that require pay TV drama channels to spend 10 per cent of their total program expenditure on new eligible (Australian and New Zealand) drama programs.

The Australian Film Commission and the Film Finance Corporation provide development funding and assistance for Australian feature films, television drama, documentaries and animated productions.

Maintaining ethnic cultural identity

The emphasis of Australia's cultural identity programs has moved from helping migrant communities to maintain their cultural practices to encouraging all Australians to understand each other better and to share their heritage. In recent times there has been a growing awareness, and practice, of the benefits of cultural sharing and understanding.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) is Australia's multicultural and multilingual public broadcaster. Sixty-eight languages are spoken on SBS Radio and programs in more than 60 languages are broadcast on SBS Television. SBS Online provides text and video services as well as audio-on-demand in 68 languages.

The National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council is the peak organisation representing and resourcing ethnic community broadcasters. It has more than 500 members across Australia, at over 100 metropolitan and regional stations, broadcasting in some 100 languages and producing more than 1700 hours of local programming each week.

According to the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural New South Wales, ethnic newspapers are produced in Australia in 42 different languages.

2. Facilitating Access to networks and services

The development of domain names in languages other than English

The Department of Communications, IT and the Arts is an active participant in the work of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

Since March 2001, ICANN and its Governmental Advisory Committee have undertaken work aimed at introducing Internationalised Domain names to the global Domain Name System. Much of ICANN's early work was focused on developing technical solutions and standards to enable the development of domain names in non-Latin character sets such as Chinese and Arabic. .

The Australian Government is supportive of countries within the GAC such as India and China who are looking for technical solutions to support the development of IDNs.

While there remains a great deal of technical testing to be done in laboratory settings and in the live root zone file (the master file of identifiers), ICANN and the GAC must also address a series of public policy issues before proper implementation occurs. This includes the development and adoption of rules for new IDN Top Level Domains and mechanisms for the resolution of disputes relating to the rights in IDN TLDs.

In November 2006, ICANN released a roadmap for the introduction of Internationalised Domain Names with a schedule for resolving both technical and policy issues by the end of 2007.

During 2007, Australia will participate actively in ICANN and GAC discussions relating to the introduction of IDNs, particularly in policy consultations with intellectual property and linguistics experts, technicians, registries and registrars and other Governments.

Through these technical and policy processes, the Australian Government expects that significant progress will be made in 2007 toward the development and implementation of IDNs. Further information about the implementation of IDNs and how ICANN is working across its communities can be observed by visiting: http://www.icann.org/topics/idn/.

Culture and Recreation Portal

The Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal provides access to online services such as news and events and information from more than 3,500 Australian websites in the fields of culture and recreation (of which about 500 are government sites and the rest are non-government). The site also holds more than 150 articles about Australia's history and culture, sports and recreation activities which are designed to be a short introduction to a

topic, providing links to related online resources. The Portal receives more than 3.5 million visits per annum.

3. Development of public domain content

Preserving Australian cultural heritage material

Australia has initiated a number of programs to preserve its cultural heritage material in digital format and ensure the provision of material reflecting and maintaining Australian culture and values.

The National Archives of Australia assists Australian Government agencies in preserving heritage material by developing policies, standards, guidelines and providing training and advice about digital record keeping. It also encourages and fosters the preservation of all other archival resources relating to Australia

Copies of all works published in Australia are received by the National Library of Australia under the legal deposit provisions of the Copyright Act—which covers books, journals, maps, newspapers and printed music.

The National Library of Australia participates in the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative which will facilitate searching and retrieval of data. Standards Australia has produced a number of standards based on that initiative.

In Australia, the Library is a partner in the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative funded Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories Project. This project aims to develop demonstrator repositories and support continuity and sustainability of digital collections, including research data sets.

The Library's contribution to the project will utilise its experience in digital preservation, including its development of PANDORA (an archive of selected, significant Australian web sites) and its membership of the International Internet Preservation Consortium.

The Library aims to complement PANDORA by taking regular snapshots of the entire Australian web domain. Such a collection would provide a significant information resource for researchers and the general public.

In 2003 the Library, on behalf of UNESCO, *prepared Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage* to form part of UNESCO's campaign to improve access to digital heritage for all the world's people. The Guidelines were prepared to offer realistic and useful guidance for those responsible for preserving digital heritage, including those having only very limited resources.

At a national level, the Cultural Ministers' Council agreed in February 2004 to establish the Collections Council of Australia to strategically address issues across the collections sector. The Collections Council has three main roles— develop long-term strategies to address issues facing collections; undertake industry support, particularly through development of a profile for the sector at a national and international level, and implement initiatives to address cross-sectoral issues.

A priority being addressed in all the collections domains (archives, galleries, libraries and museums) has been the digitisation of culturally significant written, audio and visual material and to provide online access to that material. Initiatives include the:

- Collections Australia Network (CAN);

- the Departments of Environment and Heritage and Department of Veterans' Affairs online repositories of heritage materials; and

- the Tasmanian Communities Online (TCO) Network.

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Open Source Software

Software is a key tool for access to information and knowledge, including open source software. In Australia, there are no barriers to the development, availability and use of open source software. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2002–03 Australian R&D expenditure on computer software was $775.9 million.

Australia has developed materials for the use of open source software by its government agencies. These materials include an open source sourcing guide, case studies on implementation of open source solutions in a government context, information seminars, and a 'Community of Practice' on open source and emergent technologies. This material is publicly available.

The Software Engineering Quality Centres Program provided funding from 1997 to 2003 to increase the competitiveness and technological sophistication of the software industry in Australia. A key outcome of the program was the establishment of Software Engineering Australia National which continues to deliver software quality products as a self-funding not-for-profit organisation.

4. Reaffirming the equitable balance between the interests of rights-holders and public interest

Maintaining Indigenous cultural identity

Australia is committed to preserving the languages and heritage of its Indigenous people, and the development and provision of Indigenous content.

"Blackpages" is an Indigenous-owned enterprise whose vision is to be a central communication portal to actively promote Australia's rich and vibrant Indigenous culture.

Australia's Copyright Act ensures that the interests of Australian Indigenous people are considered within the broader legislative and operational frameworks for intellectual property. Consideration extends across a complex range of traditional, national and international legal systems that interrelate with policy, protocols and guidelines in use or being developed by cultural institutions, agencies and Indigenous resource organisations.

The Australian Government administers an annual grants program, the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program, which supports the revival and maintenance of Australian Indigenous languages as living systems of knowledge shared by communities and passed down from generation to generation. The program provides funding support to record, document and increase awareness and appreciation of Indigenous languages. The emphasis of the program is on supporting community based projects by language groups, language research and the development and coordination of language resources.

The Australian Government also administers an annual grants program, the Indigenous Culture Support program, which assists the maintenance and continued development of Australian Indigenous cultures at the community level. The emphasis of the program is on participation by members of Indigenous communities, transmission of knowledge and skills across age groups, imaginative new forms of cultural expression and cultural exchange among different Indigenous communities and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures in Australia.

The Government funded Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) maintains the Indigenous Audiovisual Archives that comprise photographic images, recorded sound, films, videos and other pictorial materials, including artworks and tracings of rock art and also a number of artefacts.

AIATSIS has developed the Digital Archives Project. This project involves converting part of the existing analogue audio-visual archives to digital format. AIATSIS has developed a course and handbook designed to provide information that will allow Indigenous people to create their own good technical audiovisual documents and to archive and store these materials in local communities.

Australia's Indigenous Broadcasting Program contributes to the revival, rebuilding and maintenance of Indigenous cultural identity by supporting the operation of Indigenous owned and controlled community radio broadcasting services.