

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS (QUEENSLAND DIVISION) INCORPORATED
SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY ON THE DIGITAL DELIVERY OF
GOVERNMENT SERVICES.

Introduction

The Australian Democrats (Queensland Division) Incorporated is the organization which historically has represented the Australian Democrats in the State of Queensland. We welcome the opportunity to make a written submission to the Inquiry into the Digital Delivery of Government Services, and we offer the following brief suggestions:

Item (a)(i) of Terms of Reference

With regard to item (a)(i) of the Terms of Reference, we recommend that privacy protection be built into Government digital systems offering Government services.

With regard to item (a)(i) of the Terms of Reference, we further recommend that privacy complaint-handling agencies in Australia, at all levels, be properly resourced and funded. We believe such agencies are often under-resourced and under-funded, as they are often considered, incorrectly we believe, as not essential to good governance.

Item (a)(ii) of Terms of Reference

With regard to item (a)(ii) of the Terms of Reference, we note that there may be security concerns if personal data held by the Australian Government is controlled by companies outside of Australia. We therefore suggest that the operation of digital services be not outsourced, and, if outsourced, then these ought to be to wholly Australian owned entities.

Item (a)(iv) of Terms of Reference

We note that item (a)(iv) of the Terms of Reference refers to “value for money” in the digital delivery of government services. We suspect that out-sourcing of service might superficially provide a lower cost to the government, although in the long-term this may well not be the case, given the potential problems of out-sourcing.

Item (d) of Terms of Reference

With regard to item (d) of the Terms of Reference, we welcome digital delivery of Government services, as a matter of access and information, although at the same time we urge that citizens ought to have the option of transacting Government business by traditional non-digital means. This is important, as not all citizens have good digital access.

Finally, and also with regard to item (d) of the Terms of Reference, it should be emphasized that adequate backup should be inbuilt into systems of digital delivery, to deal with potential technical failure. This of course is standard professional practice, although it is especially important in dealing with Government information.

Conclusion

We believe the digital delivery of government services has wide support in Australia, and indeed is part of a global trend. There are, however, potential dangers for Australia, and we need to proceed cautiously.

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