

ESD Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB 2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

COMMENT ON DRAFT PRODUCTIVITY REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ESD

I refer to your minute of 8 March requesting comment on the findings and recommendations of the draft productivity report on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

AUSLIG has several comments on the findings and recommendations of this report.

- AUSLIG is the Australian Surveying **and** Land Information Group. See page XI.
- On page 55, AUSLIG should be referred to as “AUSLIG, Australia’s national mapping agency operates within...”.
- AUSLIG **is not** the “...*Commonwealth Government’s primary source of advice on land use.*” See page 55.
 - AUSLIG **is** Australia’s national mapping agency, the Commonwealth Government’s primary source of advice on spatial information matters. Its role is to ensure that fundamental spatial information is available for the benefit of the Australian community through partnerships with industry and government.
- “*Data collection*” appears to solely relate to the ABS statistical information. The report has overlooked that “*data collection*” relating to ESD also includes spatial information.
 - Spatial information produced by AUSLIG provides the base mapping of the continent. The data is available in consistent format across the nation. It is a useful tool for natural resources management, natural disaster assessment and environmental management and monitoring.
- The report highlights the “*fragmented nature of existing data collection efforts*” and “*Gaps in monitoring and reporting*” Again, “*data collection*” does not appear to include spatial information. See pages XXIX and 111 respectively.
 - AUSLIG provides up-to-date satellite imagery through its operation of the Australian Centre for Remote Sensing (ACRES). ACRES delivers products and services to; improve agriculture productivity, provide data on the current state of the environment, and allow assessment of damage from natural disasters such as drought, flood and fire. More importantly, ACRES provides access to 20 years of retrospective satellite data with which to analyse and

monitor environmental changes and make comparisons with today's environmental conditions.

- There is some confusion regarding Recommendation 7.4. *“Data collection relating to ESD issues should be rationalised to avoid duplication of effort and coverage. The ABS should be given the major responsibility for developing, in consultation with stakeholders, standard classifications and consistent measurement protocols for collection of state of the environment data...”*.
 - We agree with the first sentence. Australia's national mapping agency, AUSLIG, has the lead responsibility within the Commonwealth for the coordinated development and implementation of the Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI). The ASDI will improve access to and useability of spatial data for managing the environment and other purposes. The Commonwealth, through the Commonwealth Spatial Data Committee (CSDC), is facilitating national coordination in the collection and management of spatial data. CSDC is working in conjunction with the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council (ANZLIC) which represents the views of all jurisdictions in relation to the Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI) and land information matters generally.
 - The second sentence is a related but separate issue. The ABS, as Australia's central statistical authority, has a primary role in developing standard classifications and statistical measurement protocols. It must be acknowledged however that other Commonwealth agencies (notably Environment Australia, the Bureau of Rural Resources and the National Land & Water Resources Audit) have expertise in practical scientific monitoring techniques and also have existing responsibilities with regard to state-of-the-environment reporting. ABS, Environment Australia, BRS and the NLWRA are all active members of the CSDC. ABS should be encouraged to use the CSDC, and through it, ANZLIC to ensure all agencies with an interest in the management and use of spatial environmental data are involved in the development of standards and the coordination of data collection programs.
- The comment from the *Environmental Research and Information Consortium PtyLtd* that *“There is a tendency by some Departments and agencies (eg ABS and AGSO) to impose significant data purchase costs and other restrictions on the use of data...”*, does not reflect the availability or accessibility of AUSLIG data.
 - A Grant Partnership Program being conducted by AUSLIG. The program is a fundamental part of the Government's ASDI implementation strategy and aims to assist groupings of agencies and companies to release existing spatial data holdings into the public arena. The program aims to specifically target private industry and research and development organisations.
 - AUSLIG's policy, where possible, is to provide spatial data at the cost of distribution. Through AUSLIG embracing Internet technology, the cost of distribution has been significantly reduced. AUSLIG recently introduced a new pricing and delivery scheme for key Commonwealth digital map data. This initiative improves access to fundamental mapping data using technology from the Internet and has resulted in a 66 per cent reduction in the price of selected data. The products targeted by this initiative include AUSLIG's GEODATA TOPO-250K, 1:100 000 scale and 1:1 million scale Mapdata.

- Also, last year's release of AUSLIG's SPOT-LITE product provides the opportunity to select and order satellite imagery through the Internet, creating better access for a wider range of users.
- There is concern regarding the comment from the ABS stating "*Access to data collected for purposes other than statistical ones are often difficult as they are not always maintained in such a way to facilitate access by other potential users...metadata is not always available and even information on the existence of the data is not readily available...*". This comment is not reflective of many spatial data sets held by the Commonwealth, State or Territories.
- Geographic information held by government agencies throughout Australia has been made more accessible through the development of the Australian Spatial Data Directory (ASDD). The ASDD is an Internet directory that provides access to spatial data catalogues (metadata) held by many Australian government agencies. The development was coordinated by AUSLIG, Environment Australia and the Bureau of Rural Sciences.

Please contact me on 6201 4262 if you require further information or any points need clarification.

Peter Holland
General Manager

18 March 1999