

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE DIGITAL DIVIDEND GREEN PAPER

I did not know of the Digital Dividend Green Paper until I read about it in the press after the closing date for submissions of 26.2.2010. The press report pointed out that an extension of one week has been given to key respondents. Please therefore also consider this submission which answers the following questions:

Question 3.17: Should digital dividend spectrum be used to allow expansion or enhancement of existing broadcasting services? What would it deliver?

Answer: Yes. It should deliver:

The curriculum content for key skills development and related education;

Critical supporting information for communities to contribute to, understand, debate, manage and evaluate the outcomes of Australian government and related local, regional and international industry and community goals and directions;

Other Australian cultural content which is critically designed for use at home and for export, in line with United Nations conventions and related international standards and directions where appropriate, which other nations besides Australia may or may not have adopted.

According to the Digital Dividend Green Paper, the Australian Government's primary policy objective in relation to the digital spectrum is to maximise the benefit that use of the spectrum will bring to the Australian community and economy over time (p. 5). The Prime Minister (2009) listed the following key Challenges for the Future and these are ideally also the social goals which governments and many related industries and communities ideally support competitively, through investment in development of the digital spectrum and to inform members of diverse regional communities:

- Delivering an education revolution to build the skills that Australia will need as the economy recovers
- Ensuring that every Australian can get the health care they need when and where they need it
- Building a lower carbon economy and creating the low pollution jobs of the future
- Securing water supplies for our cities, towns and farmers, and acting to restore the health of our rivers; and
- Implementing a new way of governing that is more open, accountable and in touch with the community

It is hard to see how broadband development, which is an essential service for Australians, backed by government, could be considered anything other than a low risk investment opportunity suitable for industry superannuation funds and others. This superficially also appears to be an investment with natural development multiplier effects

for many Australian industries and related communities. Implementation of the G20 London Summit Leaders Statement and Declaration on Strengthening the Financial Systems (2.4.09) requires consideration in related global and regional development contexts in which carbon pollution reduction and offset development demand attention to introduce triple bottom line accounting – which is environmental, social and economic.

Australia is a single land and economy which supports many interrelated communities and environments. The attached discussion of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development report entitled, ‘New South Wales Planning Framework (December 2009)’, requires consideration in this context. As the NSW Department of Planning and others have often pointed out, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) was groundbreaking because it recognised the importance of an integrated understanding of relevant environmental, social and economic issues when making land use planning decisions (p.6). Planning decisions about land, water or air should often refer logically to the Commonwealth policy agenda as well as involve knowledge about one or more state, regional and related local government areas. This necessitates a highly and broadly informed and experienced approach to treatment of all regional environmental, social and economic matters.

Unless the media plays a key role in educating Australians better for greener jobs in the above context of broader understanding, achieving a lower carbon economy and low pollution jobs will be much harder. Since the 1960’s, the development of the national reserve system in Australia has been based on the principles of comprehensiveness, adequateness and representativeness (CAR) (ANZECC & MCFFA 1997). These principles are directly related to the development of the Interim Biogeographic Regionalization of Australia (IBRA), which divides Australia into 85 distinct biogeographic regions and 403 sub-regions. IBRA provides a scientific framework and tool to aid and evaluate the realization of the CAR principles in the development of the national reserve system. For example, the current goals of the national research system are to protect 80% of the ecosystems represented by both the IBRA regions and sub-regions by 2010-2015 (DEWHA 2008a). In the last decade however, the acquisition of land for the national reserve system has not met targets (Sattler & Taylor 2008). The treatment of farming, mining and other regional industries should also take account of the impacts of various forms of production on climate change and biodiversity. Government should consider further acquisition of protected land and encourage industry and communities through appropriate media content and related critical debate.

The objects of the Radiocommunications Act (1992) should have focused many past communications inquiries more effectively on educational, information and entertainment content because the communications choices people make are driven by the media content available, not only by the cost of its carriage. The act seeks management of the radiofrequency spectrum to maximise the overall public benefit by ensuring efficient allocation and use of the spectrum. It also seeks provision of the spectrum for use by agencies involved in the defence or national security of Australia, law enforcement, the provision of emergency services, or for use by other public or community services.

Law without clear aims, which is not in plain English, and which has no definitions of key terms is merely anti-democratic rubbish which feeds lawyers. Industry and community standards which people are expected to use should be freely available as they are currently often voluminous and very expensive. Government should assist all industries and communities to participate in broader, more open, regional planning to identify the media content necessary for more effective management and skills development, as well as entertainment product, to achieve the diverse goals of sustainable development as broadly as possible. The 'education revolution' is ideally addressed in a related planning context.

The article entitled 'Labor targets skills shortages' in the Australian Financial Review (AFR 1.3.2010, p.1) outlines the need for new models of vocational education and on-the-job training as well as more targeted temporary skilled migration to quickly meet industry demands. As well as development of skills to meet specific shortages, many open education models for community and industry management to achieve sustainable development are necessary. The article entitled 'Bill of rights looks dead in the water' in the Sydney Morning Herald (17.2.2010, p.3) states the Attorney General is now preparing an education campaign promoting greater awareness of human rights instead of a bill of rights. Plain English education available through a variety of media is vital to support this general direction. The curriculum content on the open website www.Carolodonnell.com.au is offered for consideration in this context. A related direction to improve quality and contain legal cost is discussed in the attached article entitled 'A healthier approach to justice and environment development in Australian communities and beyond'.

An Open University (OU) approach to education is recommended. An OU meeting I attended in Milton Keynes in England (29.5.08) first stressed the importance of QUALITY, ACCESS and SCALE in OU curriculum production and dissemination. The reason for the establishment of the OU is to make higher education available to many more people. All registered OU students have access to an approved tutor – local or online. I assume that all education provision should also aim to be in line with the Australian government commitment to AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, HIGH QUALITY and GREENER services. This direction is discussed in the attached submission to the Financial Services Inquiry of the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, which addresses the issues of financial and other skills development.

In an article entitled 'The streets of Conroy are paved with gold' (SMH 17.2.2010, p. 13), Peter Costello, the former Treasurer, helpfully pointed out that it no longer matters what Treasury recommends on television taxes because Minister Conroy has already provided massive tax cuts to three television companies before the budget. Tax cuts are normally announced in the budget as the result of government working out how much revenue it needs and 'assessing the competing claims between, say, retirees or carers or...television stations'. The difference between such groups is that only television stations are provider groups who can also serve retirees, carers, industries and other community members by providing education and related information services for them, as well as entertainment.

The recent Advisory Group on Reform of Australian Government Administration stated its main purpose is to devise a blueprint for reform of Australian Government Administration. It stated the Commonwealth public service is comprised of 160,000

public servants in 97 agencies but gave little idea of what they do. Until this information is available it is not possible to suitably align the activities of Commonwealth, state and local government with related industries and communities, including non-profit organizations, although this must be done to serve the population well, including through digital and related content development.

There is already far too much outdated and conflicting Commonwealth and state law and related bureaucratic and legal activity devoid of the kind of international and national vision which is reflected in the objects of the EP&A Act. These recognize the importance of openly addressing relevant environmental, social and economic issues when making land use planning decisions. The Superannuation Industry (Supervision) (SIS) Act 1993 also appears an excellent piece of legislation because of its clear definitions in a financial arena where courts have resisted the common dictionary, thus increasing the costs and pre-scientific irrationality of all operations for centuries.

The SIS act object is 'to make provision for the prudent management of certain superannuation funds, approved deposit funds and pooled superannuation trusts and have their supervision by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA), the Australian Superannuation and Investment Commission (ASIC) and the Commissioner for Taxation. The basis for supervision is stated as being 'that those funds and trusts are subject to regulation under the Commonwealth's powers with respect to corporations or pensions (eg. because the trustee is a corporation)'. The object also states that in return the supervised funds and trusts may become eligible for concessional tax treatment and that the Act does not regulate others entitled to engage in the superannuation industry'. This appears to be a basis for further related investment in the direction outlined earlier.

The following supporting steps are also suggested as a result of reading the paper on 'Reform of Australian Government Administration: Building the world's best public service' (October 2009):

1. Outline the agency names, missions, key functions and numbers of people employed in the 97 agencies of the Australian Public Service (APS).
2. Outline the names, missions, key functions and numbers of people employed in the agencies of state and territory governments and local government authorities to identify bureaucratic areas of common interest with the APS and to streamline all service provision in the national interest of Australian and related regional communities, industries and individuals.
3. Recognize that good governance normally requires clear separation of government policy from its administration, with the former driving competitive, transparent, service provision (Hilmer, 1993) so all may identify a range of economic, social and environment related outcomes. Program budgeting, as partially implemented in the public service by Wilenski (1982; 1986) is central to this broadly scientific management approach.

This direction reflects the concerns of the Advisory Group and of the Prime Minister who has emphasised ‘the importance of more inclusive policy processes within the APS, as well as an overall expectation that the Commonwealth public service will work more constructively with its state and territory counterparts’ (p. 17). Working constructively with local communities, industry and non-profit organizations is equally important for attainment of national interests and goals, including broadband and related development.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

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