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Dear Ms Garlick

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Draft of the Digital Economy Future Directions paper.

The approach that has been undertaken in providing a response to the paper has been to provide high level comments outlined below and marked up comments in the draft Future Directions paper specific to aspects of the text (Attachment 1).

In the context of the global financial crisis, as well as environmental and sustainability concerns, it is vital more than ever that Australia embraces the digital economy.

The power to change rests in our willingness to embrace innovation and technology and the capability of our people to effectively use information and technology.

At the heart of South Australia's approach is the '3 Cs' – connectivity, capability and content. In itself this is nothing new, New Zealand has adopted a similar approach and until recently it appeared that the Australian Government had as well, through its recent digital economy workshops focussed on capability, confidence and content. The current Draft has not included this sort of framework and would benefit by incorporating such a structure.

The Consultation Draft could be improved by more clearly setting the scene/context. It also mixes technology enablement, citizens desire to engage a new channel to government, and regulation.

The Draft quotes what is happening in the States in parts, but does not seem to address a single combined multi jurisdictional agenda. The paper would be enhanced by including both Federal and State Government actions and initiatives. These should also include what is being done through COAG and the Cross Jurisdictional CIO Committee.

The South Australian Government has captured its policy approach in its Information Economy Agenda (Attachment 2), the latest version of which is being considered by the Minister for Science and Information Economy. A draft of this Agenda is included for your information but at this stage it has not been formally signed off by Government. This Information Economy Agenda is intended as a 'whole-of-government' statement.

Our view is also that some linkage should be made with the Broadband Framework and the National standards endorsed in December 2008 by the Online and Communications Council.

The paper would benefit from a more detailed comment on the National Broadband Network is puzzling. NBN is but one program; connectivity is a vital enabler that drives the digital economy. South Australia has embraced the principle of connectivity in the form of a very simply stated objective: affordable, appropriate broadband for all.

It is accepted that achieving this is a monumental challenge, but the principle itself must be embodied in government policy if we are to enable a digital economy. In any event the Draft could discuss the intended benefits of the NBN and ISP filtering initiatives (as these are public) without disclosing any details associated with the tender processes being undertaken.

Industry as a sector was quite vocal during the workshops about the role that it needs to play in creating confidence. This has not been captured in the consultation Draft. Indeed as a general comment it would appear that not all of the themes that came out of the workshops have been embodied in the Draft. Only themes tied to current Federal Government policy or programs have been included in the Draft.

To prevent blurring between what is happening currently and a desired future state, we would suggest that the paper is divided between providing examples or a snapshot of current activities and setting out a strategy for achieving a desired future outcome.

Clearly achieving a digital economy relies on the willingness and influence of many stakeholders, government, industry, community and individuals themselves. We would strongly encourage that more attention is paid to identifying the roles that stakeholders need to play.

We would also support greater attention being given to examining the current state of engagement by Australians with the digital economy and the need to address the digital divide which is widening (see OECD ICT Outlook).

I hope our comments and response to the Draft paper is of assistance and look forward to receiving the final document which embraces the many views offered in determining a road map for the future of the digital economy in Australia.

Yours sincerely



Craig Fowler

**DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
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