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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Report 96

## **Treaties tabled on 16 September 2008**

Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunications Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-07) (Geneva, 16 November 2007)

Agreement with WIPO in relation to the functioning of the Australian Patent Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty, to be done at Geneva during December 2008

November 2008  
Canberra

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# Contents

Membership of the Committee .....	v
Resolution of Appointment .....	vii
List of abbreviations .....	viii
List of recommendations .....	ix
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Purpose of the Report .....	1
Conduct of the Committee's Review .....	2
<b>2 Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007 (WRC-07).....</b>	<b>3</b>
Background .....	3
Reasons for Australia to take treaty action .....	4
Obligations .....	5
Implementation.....	8
Costs .....	8
Consultation .....	9
Matters arising.....	9
Conclusions and recommendation .....	10

3 Agreement with WIPO for the Australian Patent Office to function as an ISA and IPEA under the Patent Cooperation Treaty .....	13
Introduction .....	13
Reasons for Australia to take treaty action .....	14
Obligations .....	15
Implementation.....	15
Costs .....	16
Consultation .....	16
Conclusion and recommendation .....	16
Appendix A - Submissions.....	17
Appendix B - Witnesses .....	19

# Membership of the Committee

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**Deputy Chair** Senator Julian McGauran

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Mr John Forrest MP Senator Michaelia Cash

Ms Jill Hall MP Senator Don Farrell

Ms Belinda Neal MP Senator Scott Ludlam

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Mr Luke Simpkins MP Senator Dana Wortley

Mr Chris Trevor MP

Ms Maria Vamvakou MP

## Committee Secretariat

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# Resolution of Appointment

The Resolution of Appointment of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties allows it to inquire into and report on:

- a) matters arising from treaties and related National Interest Analyses and proposed treaty actions and related Explanatory Statements presented or deemed to be presented to the Parliament;
- b) any question relating to a treaty or other international instrument, whether or not negotiated to completion, referred to the committee by:
  - (i) either House of the Parliament, or
  - (ii) a Minister; and

such other matters as may be referred to the committee by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and on such conditions as the Minister may prescribe.

## List of abbreviations

ACMA	Australian Communications Media Authority
AIS	Aeronautical Identification System
ARSP	Australian Radiofrequency Spectrum Plan
EESS	Earth-exploration Satellite Service
GMDSS	Global Maritime Distress and Safety System
HAPS	High Altitude Platform Stations
IMT	International Mobile Telecommunications
IPEA	International Preliminary Examining Authority
ISA	International Searching Authority
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
NIA	National Interest Analysis
PCT	Patent Cooperation Treaty
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WRC-07	World Radiocommunications Conference 2007

# List of recommendations

- 2 Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007 (WRC-07)

## Recommendation 1

The Committee supports the *Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007 (WRC-07)* and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

- 3 Agreement with WIPO for the Australian Patent Office to function as an ISA and IPEA under the Patent Cooperation Treaty

## Recommendation 2

The Committee supports the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in relation to the functioning of the Australian Patent Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty* and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report contains advice to Parliament on the review by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties of two treaty actions tabled in Parliament on 16 September 2008.<sup>1</sup> These treaty actions are:
  - *Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-07) (Geneva, 16 November 2007)*
  - *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization in relation to the functioning of the Australian Patent Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (to be done at Geneva during December 2008)*
- 1.2 The Report refers frequently to the National Interest Analysis (NIA) prepared for each proposed treaty action. This document is prepared by the Government agency (or agencies) responsible for the administration of Australia's responsibilities under each treaty. Copies of each NIA may be obtained from the Committee Secretariat or accessed through the Committee's website at:

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/16september2008/tor.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/16september2008/tor.htm)

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, House of Representatives 2008, *Votes and Proceedings*, No. 43, p. 527, Australia, Senate 2008, *Journal*, No. 30, p. 847.

- 1.3 Copies of each treaty action and NIA may also be obtained from the Australian Treaties Library maintained on the internet by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Australian Treaties Library is accessible through the Committee's website or directly at:

[www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/)

## Conduct of the Committee's Review

- 1.4 The reviews contained in this report were advertised in the national press and on the Committee's website.<sup>2</sup> Invitations to lodge submissions were also sent to all State Premiers, Chief Ministers, Presiding Members of Parliament and to individuals who have expressed an interest in being kept informed of proposed treaty actions. Submissions received and their authors are listed at Appendix A.
- 1.5 The Committee also received evidence at a public hearing on 13 October 2008 in Canberra. A list of witnesses who appeared before the public hearing is at Appendix B. Transcripts of evidence from public hearings may be obtained from the Committee Secretariat or accessed through the Committee's website at:

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/16september2008/hearings.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/16september2008/hearings.htm)

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2 The Committee's review of the proposed treaty actions was advertised in *The Australian* on 15 October 2008. Members of the public were advised on how to obtain relevant information both in the advertisement and via the Committee's website, and invited to submit their views to the Committee.

# 2

## Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007 (WRC-07)

### Background

- 2.1 The Agreement proposes that Australia consents to be bound by the Partial Revision of the Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-07) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), done at Geneva on 16 November 2007.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 The ITU is a specialised agency of the United Nations whose membership includes 191 governments and about 700 non-government entities. Its purpose is to maintain and extend international cooperation in the improvement and rational use of telecommunications of all kinds, including radio frequency spectrum. To this end the ITU establishes treaty arrangements and recommends

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<sup>1</sup> National Interest Analysis (NIA), para 1.

world standards for telecommunications and radio communications services, including satellite services.<sup>2</sup>

- 2.3 Australia has been a member of the ITU and its predecessor, the International Telegraph Union, since Federation. Australia's participation in ITU activities is focussed on supporting uniform international telecommunications standards and appropriate use of radio frequency spectrum to avoid harmful interference between radio communications systems of different countries.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.4 It is intended for Australia to notify its consent as soon as possible after the completion of Australia's domestic treaty process.
- 2.5 Australia has already made a declaration maintaining its longstanding position on the use of the geostationary communication satellite orbits and it intends to maintain this declaration at the time of notifying Australia's consent to be bound by the revision of the Radio Regulations.<sup>4</sup>

## **Reasons for Australia to take treaty action**

- 2.6 The main benefits of this Agreement for Australia are:
  - the alignment of Australia with the rest of the world in its regulation of the radiofrequency spectrum;
  - the alignment to international regulations that will allow for continued international compatibility;
  - bringing the maritime mobile service into line with current maritime communications technology, including distress and safety transmissions within the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS);
  - the enhancement of aeronautical security and modernisation of civil aviation telecommunication systems through changes aimed at alleviating spectrum congestion and making additional spectrum available for aeronautical and air traffic management applications; and

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2 Mr Brenton Thomas, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 2.

3 Mr Brenton Thomas, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 2.

4 NIA, para 3.

- extending existing primary frequency allocations for the Earth-exploration satellite service (EESS) to facilitate research and exploration of Earth resources and environmental elements.<sup>5</sup>

## Other considerations

- 2.7 In addition to revising the Radio Regulations, a World Radiocommunication Conference is empowered to ‘deal with any other question of a worldwide character within its competence’ (Article 13 Constitution and Article 7 Convention). To this end, WRC-07 deleted, adopted and revised a range of resolutions and recommendations, which are also set out in its Final Acts.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.8 Resolutions and recommendations do not bind Member States. Rather, they provide guidance to Member States on the implementation of the Radio Regulations and to the various organs of the ITU on administrative matters. As such, the only part of the Final Acts that is legally binding – and therefore constituting a treaty action that is subject to Australia’s domestic treaty process – is the Partial Revision of the Radio Regulations.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.9 Australia will retain its sovereign right to control transmissions within and into its territory and to protect Australian users from interference from foreign systems.<sup>8</sup>

## Obligations

- 2.10 The WRC-07 revisions of the Radio Regulations made several changes that impact on the international allocation and use of the radiofrequency spectrum. As part of the Radio Regulations, these changes will become binding upon Australia. The following provides a brief outline of some of the key changes arising out of the WRC-07 revision of the Radio Regulations.<sup>9</sup>

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5 NIA, paras 5-12.

6 NIA, paras 5-12.

7 NIA, paras 5-12.

8 NIA, para 5.

9 NIA, para 20.

## **Identification of new bands for International Mobile Telecommunications**

2.11 The WRC-07 revisions expanded the frequency range identified for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT).<sup>10</sup> However, because Australia has no close neighbours, spectrum arrangements for broadcasting services in Australia in this band are a national regulatory issue that have no significant impact on Australia's international obligations in the context of the Radio Regulations.<sup>11</sup>

## **Maritime procedures**

2.12 International regulations related to the maritime mobile service were updated to reflect current maritime communications technology, including distress and safety transmissions within the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System:

- the 156.525 MHz band (156.4875–156.5625 MHz) was made the international distress frequency for digital selective calling; and
- the frequencies 161.975 MHz and 162.025 MHz, which are the aeronautical identification system (AIS) frequencies, were also made available to the mobile-satellite service for reception of AIS information.<sup>12</sup>

2.13 The changes agreed to at WRC-07 will improve global maritime navigation and provisions for maritime distress and safety.<sup>13</sup>

## **Aeronautical services**

2.14 Aeronautical security has been enhanced and civil aviation telecommunication systems modernised through:

- upgrading the radiolocation service to primary allocation status in the bands 9000–9200 MHz and 9300–9500 MHz;
- allocating additional spectrum for aeronautical telecommand and high bit-rate aeronautical telemetry; and
- adding new allocations for the aeronautical mobile (R) service.<sup>14</sup>

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10 IMT refers to the family of advanced mobile technologies that will support for example third generation wireless broadband services such as WiMAX.

11 Additional bands identified for use by IMT include 450470 MHz and 2.32.4 GHz.

12 NIA, para 22.

13 NIA, para 25.

14 NIA, para 24.

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- 2.15 The changes agreed to at WRC-07 will improve global civil aviation safety.<sup>15</sup>

### Earth-exploration satellite service (EESS)

- 2.16 The primary frequency allocations for EESS (which monitor the natural emissions of the planet, with consequent applications such as predicting and monitoring natural disasters, meteorology and climate change) were extended, facilitating research and exploration of Earth resources and environmental elements. <sup>16</sup>
- 2.17 The WRC-07 revisions also approved proposals concerning the use and further development of satellite systems using highly inclined orbits, high altitude platforms, and the compatibility and sharing between different space and terrestrial services. <sup>17</sup>

### Other Matters

- 2.18 The WRC-07 revisions also approved proposals concerning the use and further development of satellite systems using highly inclined orbits and high altitude platform stations (HAPS), as well as the compatibility and sharing between different space and terrestrial services. The 135.7-137.8 kHz band was made available for low-power secondary amateur use.<sup>18</sup>
- 2.19 The WRC-07 outcome for satellites in highly inclined orbits, HAPS, sharing compatibility studies and amateur service allocations are viewed as ongoing and necessary initiatives that may benefit the Australian community in the longer term.<sup>19</sup>
- 2.20 The WRC-07 revisions also advocated the development of spectrum management guidelines for radiocommunications in emergency and disaster relief, as well as identification and maintenance of available frequencies for use in the early stages of humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of a disaster. The ITU will develop a database for frequency management in disaster situations. <sup>20</sup>
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15 NIA, para 25.

16 NIA, para 26

17 NIA, para 26.

18 NIA, para 27

19 NIA, para 27.

20 NIA, paras 23-26.

## Implementation

- 2.21 The Committee noted that if Australia fails to notify its decision by 1 January 2012, it will be deemed to have provisionally consented to be bound by the revisions, until it notifies its decision. Inaction by Australia may have a negative effect on Australia's standing within the ITU and on Australia's negotiating position at future reviews of the Radio Regulations.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.22 Australia's obligations under the Radio Regulations are implemented through the *Australian Radiofrequency Spectrum Plan* (ARSP), which is prepared by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in accordance with sections 30 and 34 of the *Radiocommunications Act 1992*. The existing ARSP will be updated by ACMA to take account of the WRC-07 revision.<sup>22</sup>

## Costs

- 2.23 There are no identifiable direct costs to Commonwealth, State or Territory Governments arising from the proposed treaty action.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.24 In regards to whether or not the new arrangements under the Agreement would impact on the price of telecommunications in Australia, the Committee noted evidence from the Australian Communications and Media Authority which stated:

While you could not say exactly what the price outcome might be for telecommunications services, there are clearly going to be new services available through the WRC-07 processes in region 2<sup>24</sup>. The question then is whether we within Australia pick up those sorts of rearrangements or spectrum as well. Some of that is subject to the spectrum planning that ACMA is undertaking at this time.<sup>25</sup>

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21 NIA, para 12.

22 NIA, para 29.

23 NIA, para 30.

24 Region 2 refers to Americas, Greenland and some of the eastern Pacific Islands. Australia is in ITU Region 3

25 Mr Martin Lensson, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p.5

## Consultation

- 2.25 A representative from the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy stated that:

In preparation for the WRC-07, ACMA undertook an extensive stakeholder consultation process through its International Radio Communications Advisory Committee.<sup>26</sup>

- 2.26 Australian industry and government representatives were consulted and there was general support for the proposed treaty action from relevant stakeholders and acknowledgment of the benefits of the WRC-07 revision to Australia.<sup>27</sup>

## Matters arising

- 2.27 The Committee received a submission with comments from various Western Australian agencies including:
- the Western Australian Office of e-Government;
  - the Office of State Security and Emergency Coordination; and
  - the Western Australian Police.

- 2.28 The submission highlighted comments made by the national Law Enforcement Security Radio Spectrum Committee (LESRSC) to ACMA in July 2008:

*“Among the spectrum used by police forces is a part of 1.6 MHz wide slots within the 450-470 MHz band known as the Law Enforcement and Public Safety (LEPS) spectrum. Currently LEPS spectrum facilitates cross jurisdictional communications. In addition, jurisdictions use a number of frequencies (11) in the 480-490 MHz band for National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC) operations.*

*Following the WRC-2007, the 450-470 MHz spectrum has been identified on a global basis for IMT2000 applications. If 450-470 MHz is set aside for IMT2000 applications, law enforcement and security agencies will lose access to 450-470 MHz spectrum. This*

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26 Mr Brenton Thomson, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p.3.

27 NIA, para 25-41.

*impacts on interoperability capability for cross jurisdictional communications.*

*In the absence of clear direction on future spectrum allocations, jurisdictions continue to invest to maintain and/or enhance their existing systems. As such, Federal Government should sufficiently assist any relocation following the current spectrum reform. Otherwise an average 7 years may be required to relocate the existing systems."*

- 2.29 The WA agencies then comment that:

WA Police are represented on LESRSC, and have reiterated their concern over this proposed change. WA Police highlight that the 450-470 MHz band is common for all law enforcement agencies in Australia, and particularly in WA there is a significant investment in communications systems operating in this band. There is a view that there would need to be a substantial lead time (for example the 7 years suggested by LESRSC) in planning to move out of this band if it is to be re-allocated for international mobile communications as proposed by WRC-2007.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusions and recommendation

- 2.30 The Committee notes the submission of the Western Australian Office of e-Government, Office of State Security and Emergency Coordination and Western Australian Police which raises concerns about proposed spectrum changes under the treaty.<sup>29</sup>
- 2.31 The Committee considers that the Government should give consideration to these concerns before ratifying the treaty.
- 2.32 Overall the Committee considers that the proposed Agreement will be of benefit to Australia in aligning its radio-frequency spectrum with the rest of the world. The Committee also notes that Australia will retain its sovereign right to control transmission within and into its territory and to protect Australian users from interference from foreign systems. The Committee therefore recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

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28 Submission 6, p.2.

29 Submission 6, p.2.

**Recommendation 1**

The Committee supports the *Partial Revision of the 2004 Radio Regulations, as incorporated in the International Telecommunication Union Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2007 (WRC-07)* and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.



# 3

## Agreement with WIPO for the Australian Patent Office to function as an ISA and IPEA under the Patent Cooperation Treaty

### Introduction

- 3.1 The proposed treaty action is definitive signature of the *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in relation to the functioning of the Australian Patent Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty*. The Agreement will extend an existing treaty, due to expire in December 2008, until 2017.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 The Patent Cooperation Treaty facilitates the filing and assessment of a patent application in multiple jurisdictions and provides for the appointment of a national patent office as an International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA).
- 3.3 The purpose of this Agreement is to continue the appointment of the Australian Patent Office as an ISA and IPEA, therefore allowing IP Australia to continue as a competent search and examination authority for international patent applications filed in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Interest Analysis (NIA), para 2.

<sup>2</sup> NIA, para 4.

## Reasons for Australia to take treaty action

- 3.4 The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) simplifies and streamlines the process of filing for patent protection in a number of countries through a single international patent application. IP Australia informed the Committee that the 139 member states of the PCT are:
- ... the bigger economic targets for Australian applicants wishing to export – places such as Japan, Continental Europe, America et cetera are all members of the PCT.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.5 Using the provisions of the PCT therefore provides significant time and cost savings for patent applicants by allowing them to make a single application rather than separate applications in each country they are seeking patent protection in.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.6 An integral part of this process is the appointment of ISAs and IPEAs to conduct the international search and examination required for each application. Appointment of the Australian Patent Office as an ISA and IPEA provides additional cost savings for Australian applicants by also eliminating unnecessary repetition of search and examination across countries.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.7 The Australian Patent Office has been an international authority since 1980 and is one of only 13 patent offices appointed world wide under the PCT.<sup>6</sup> There is international prestige attached to this appointment and Australia has a high standing in the intellectual property community.<sup>7</sup> As an international authority:
- IP Australia can continue to influence development of the international IP system from a position of operational credibility.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.8 As part of IP Australia, the Australian Patent Office operates on a full cost recovery basis and its activities are revenue neutral to Government. The Office issues reports on about 3000 international searches each year and has bilateral agreements with other countries,

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3 Mr Victor Portelli, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 10.

4 NIA, para 6.

5 NIA, para 6.

6 Mr Victor Portelli, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 7.

7 NIA, para 9.

8 Mr Victor Portelli, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 8.

including New Zealand, Thailand and Singapore, to perform searches for those countries.<sup>9</sup>

- 3.9 The appointment of the Australian Patent Office also provides considerable benefits for local business and industry, which are able to access and use the large skills and knowledge base conveniently available through the Office.<sup>10</sup>

## Obligations

- 3.10 Article 2 of the treaty provides that the Australian Patent Office shall carry out an international search and international preliminary examination in accordance with the Patent Cooperation Treaty (including its Regulations and Administrative Instructions) and this Agreement to evaluate the originality of an invention and its industrial applicability.
- 3.11 In doing so, the Australian Patent Office is obliged to apply established search and examination rules (Article 2(2)), manage a quality management system (Article 2(3)), and render mutual assistance with the International Bureau of WIPO (Article 2(4)).<sup>11</sup>
- 3.12 Annexes to the Agreement specify which countries the Australian Patent Office will act as an ISA and IPEA for, the language used by the Office, subject matter not excluded from search or examination, and fees and charges (Annex A to D).

## Implementation

- 3.13 No additional action is required to implement this Agreement as it largely continues arrangements already in place under the existing agreement and implemented by the *Patents Act 1990*.

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9 NIA, para 8.

10 Mr Victor Portelli, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2008, p. 8.

11 NIA, paras 11 to 14.

## Costs

- 3.14 There will be no additional costs above Australia's existing annual membership contribution to WIPO of about \$750,000. The Committee was informed however that as IP Australia is the only ISA/IPEA Australian patent applicants can use, there would be costs to industry if the Agreement does not proceed.<sup>12</sup>

## Consultation

- 3.15 The Australian Patent Office has received very positive support from industry and professional organisations for its role as an ISA/IPEA. Consultation undertaken specifically in relation to this Agreement indicated strong support from stakeholders for continuation of this role.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion and recommendation

- 3.16 The Committee recognises the advantages to Australian business and industry arising from the appointment of the Australian Patent Office as an ISA and IPEA, as well as the contribution that this appointment makes to Australia's international standing in intellectual property fora. The Committee therefore supports binding treaty action being taken.

### Recommendation 2

*The Committee supports the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in relation to the functioning of the Australian Patent Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.*

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12 NIA, para 17.

13 NIA, Consultation attachment.



# A

## Appendix A - Submissions

### Treaties tabled 16 September 2008

1. Australian Patriot Movement
2. Australian Patriot Movement
3. Australian Patriot Movement
4. Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia
5. IP Australia
6. Western Australian agencies



# B

## Appendix B - Witnesses

### Monday, 13 October – Canberra

#### Attorney-General's Department

Mr Stephen Bouwhuis, Assistant Secretary, Office of International Law

#### Australian Communications and Media Authority

Mr Erik Lensson, Chief Engineer

#### Department of Communications and the Digital Economy

Mr Brenton Thomas, Assistant Secretary, Networks Operations and Spectrum Branch

Mr Don Williams, Manager, Spectrum Allocations & Emergency Services Section

#### Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mr Lester Martin, Registrar of Treaties

#### IP Australia

Mr Victor Portelli, General Manager, Patents and Plants Breeders Rights

Mrs Joanne Rush, Assistant Director, International Policy

Mr Philip Spann, Assistant General Manager, Patents and Plant Breeders Rights