

Submission to the Joint Committee on Publications

Answers to supplementary questions—National Office for the Information Economy

1. The "Dublin Core" is the leading international standard on metadata: why was it necessary to invent one for Australian government use?

The Australian Government standard, Australian Government Locator Service (AGLS) is based upon Dublin Core, and is fully compatible with Dublin Core. AGLS is recognised as an extension of Dublin Core. The extensions primarily allow the description of offline resources, such as government services.

2. How closely does DCITA work with agencies such as the Archives Office, the National Library and the Disability Commissioner in relation to the development and implementation of standards across agencies' Internet sites?

AGLS was developed jointly with the National Archives of Australia (NAA). NOIE (formerly part of DCITA) works very closely with the NAA and the National Library on the development of the AGLS metadata standard for Commonwealth government Internet sites, and on the training of government agencies in the use of AGLS.

DCITA works closely with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner regarding the implementation of website accessibility standards, in resolving issues in online accessibility, and in prompting training opportunities.

3. What is the relationship between Gatekeeper and the AGLS?

There is no direct relationship between Gatekeeper and the AGLS.

Gatekeeper is crucial infrastructure that provides authentication, non-repudiation and security for online transactions for Government and its clients. AGLS allows the online discovery of government information and services.

When combined with the authentication services provided by GATEKEEPER, AGLS will form a critical element in enabling the government online environment to be considered as a *single authoritative source for government information and services*.

4. Does the Government strategy take into account the needs of those residents who have a disability?

The *Government Online Strategy* requires all agencies to test their websites for accessibility, and all new website contracts to include accessibility as a key performance measure. All websites are also to follow the W3C accessibility guidelines to a sufficient extent that they pass recognised tests of accessibility.

5. In February the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation published a report on web site design in relation to those living in rural Australia. To the extent that

the report deals with government sector information, have the findings been taken into account in your Department's work?

The Government Online Strategy draws attention to this report, and the findings have been promoted by a number of presentations made at Government Online Seminars.

6. The DCITA annual report gives details about 'an online authentication framework for e-commerce'. Do these arrangements extend to the authenticity of information

GATEKEEPER is the Government's strategy for online authentication, and requires any government electronic commerce solutions to use endorsed security architectures. At this stage, there are no plans to extend these arrangements to information unrelated to e-commerce.

7. The National Library of Australia told the Committee late last year that it accepts the authorship of records at face value. The Committee is interested to hear any views you might have about ensuring authenticity.

Procedures for verifying the source of records will vary according to the records, and the purpose to which they will be put. The National Library is in the best position to decide the basis for authorship attribution of its records.

8. In the DCITA annual report, there was a brief comment about a pilot government Information Centre in Tasmania. Would you provide the Committee some information on it and an up-date on whether it is meeting its objectives?

The Government Information Centre (GIC) pilot call centre was established in Launceston in October 1998 to test the utility and feasibility of establishing a simple directory service to put people in touch with the appropriate Government agency. It is the number for people to call when they don't know whom to call.

Market research for the GIC pilot indicates that there is a demand from the public for a directory service providing current and accurate information on Government services.

9. Has DCITA produced any guidance on preservation of non-print material? If so, has it consulted with ScreenSound Australia or other agencies in its formulation?

No, this is the responsibility of the National Archives of Australia.

10. Does DCITA have a role with respect to standards for preservation and access to information and services produced in other electronic formats (that is, not for the Internet)?

The Government Online Strategy requires agencies to implement record keeping guidelines issued by the National Archives of Australia. Commonwealth websites are a form of publication and as such they are considered to be records for archival purposes.

11. Is DCITA a full or sponsoring member of the W3C?

The Arts Branch of DCITA was a sponsoring member of the W3C. Subsequent to the amalgamation of the Office for Government Online and the National Office for the Information Economy, membership was transferred to the National Office for the Information Economy. The cost of this membership is \$5,000 (US).

12. Do the Governing structures of W3C go beyond the Massachusetts Institute of Technology?

The W3C Team lead the technical Activities at W3C and manage the operations of the Consortium. The Team includes more than fifty researchers and engineers from around the world and is led by the Chairman (Jean-François Abramatic) and the Director (Tim Berners-Lee). Most of the Team works physically at the three host institutions (Massachusetts Institute of Technology - Laboratory for Computer Science in the United States, Institute National de Recherche en Enformation et en Automatique in France, and Keio University in Japan).