

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014**  
**Communications Portfolio**  
**Department of Communications**

**Question No: 202**

**Program No. 1.2**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: E-Government policy**

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

Can the Department provide a detailed breakdown of the differences between the objectives and time tables for implementation for the Government's "e-government and digital economy election commitment"...and the former Government's Digital First initiative?

**Answer:**

The Convenient Services Anytime, Anywhere (CSAA) initiatives in the Government's policy for E-Government and the Digital Economy are the most directly comparable with the former Government's Digital First initiative. The objectives and timetables of the respective CSAA and Digital First commitments can be found in the references below, and have been reproduced in Attachments A and B.

**Convenient Services Anytime Anywhere** – page 19-20, *The Coalitions' Policy for E-Government and the Digital Economy*, August 2013 (Please see Attachment A). The entire document is available online at: [www.liberal.org.au/our-policies](http://www.liberal.org.au/our-policies)

**Digital First** – page 50, *Advancing Australia as a Digital Economy: An update to the National Digital Economy Strategy*, June 2013 (Please see Attachment B). The entire document is available online at: [www.archive.dbcde.gov.au/2013/september/national\\_digital\\_economy\\_strategy/advancing\\_australia\\_as\\_a\\_digital\\_economy](http://www.archive.dbcde.gov.au/2013/september/national_digital_economy_strategy/advancing_australia_as_a_digital_economy)

### *Convenient Services Anytime Anywhere*

It's time for the Australian government to show leadership on the digital economy and make a clear, comprehensive commitment to getting all of its major services and interactions with individuals online. The Coalition believes 2017 is a realistic and achievable date for this goal. Not all Australians have easy Internet access or adequate digital skills, so while the presumption should be the Internet is the default way of interacting, face-to-face provision and storefronts (albeit in a streamlined and consolidated form) will be needed for years to come.

A Coalition government will:

1. Designate the Internet as the default way to interact with users, other than for defined exceptions. We will look to establish a Digital Service Standard and Digital Design Guide, modeled on the UK equivalents, to ensure consistent design of current and future services.
2. Give people the option to elect to receive material from the government in digital form or in hard-copy, depending on their circumstances. We will aim to provide all correspondence, documents and forms in digital form, as well as hard-copy, by 2017.
3. Seek to ensure every Government interaction that occurs more than 50,000 times per year can be achieved online by 2017. Video-conferencing via technologies such as WRTC will be an acceptable substitute for physical proximity in most cases.
4. Ensure Agencies report what proportion of their digital services are not mobile-accessible from 2015. Digital services and information should be platform-agnostic and useable from devices such as tablets and smartphones.
5. Designate three agencies with high-volume client interaction to trial three services using next generation tele-presence, such as in-browser Web RTC, from 2014.
6. Provide individuals and entities (on an opt-in basis) with a unique digital 'inbox' – a secure and permanent contact point for communication with government that can be used as a stand-alone 'mailbox' or on a 'store and forward' basis in combination with an email address, Australia Post Digital Mailbox or some other destination application. This service will build on the MyGov inbox but add flexibility to use in a redirect mode or integrate with existing and emerging commercial products (e.g. APDM or digital vaults). This will be delivered within existing ICT resources. We will accelerate take-up and value to users by opening this facility to State, Territory and Local government communications.

> **First, individuals and businesses will be able to complete all priority services online using major platforms, including smartphones and tablets where appropriate, by December 2017.**

- ‘Priority services’ are those transaction-based services identified by each agency that will enable them to serve 80 per cent or more of their client base consistent with the Digital First commitments and principles. Digital First is not mandated for any particular service, provided that each agency meets the 80 per cent target in aggregate unless specifically exempted by the portfolio minister. The reasons for an exemption must be reflected in the agency’s Digital First plan.

> **Second, individuals and businesses who need to receive inperson services will have the option of accessing those services via video wherever this method is cost-effective and consistent with government policy from December 2015.**

A range of services are delivered on a face to face basis across all Australian Government agencies. Each agency delivering face-to-face services will be required to assess options for the use of video technologies for those services in its Digital First plan. It is expected that in many cases:

- individuals may choose to migrate to online self-service channels from in-person services, to, for example online claiming
- for more complex services, the in person options will continue to be available particularly where that is necessary for policy reasons, cost-effectiveness or both
- for complex services agencies will trial video-based service delivery using online appointment systems to manage demand.

> **Third, individuals and businesses will be able to choose to register for all priority government services entirely online by December 2016.**

- By December 2016, individuals will be able to choose to register online for participating Australian Government services. Many will be available through myGov (including e:tax, welfare, child support, health and aged care services).
- Agencies will also develop strategies and investment plans to make all hard-copy communications electronic (for example, claim forms and letters) by enabling people to receive digital mail for services such as e:tax, welfare, child support, health and aged care services in their myGov account or a third-party digital mailbox. These strategies will also take into account the need for access and equity for more vulnerable clients and other legal considerations
- Businesses are already able to register online for Australian business numbers (ABNs). By December 2016, they will be able to register for all priority government business services online.

> **Fourth, individuals will be able to choose a single authentication method to access priority government services from December 2017.**

- Individuals will have the option of access to a range of government services online using one set of log on credentials through myGov from 2013. myGov will offer online access to Medicare, Centrelink, child support services, personally controlled electronic health records, and disability, veterans and taxation services with a user friendly interface progressively from 2013.

