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Ms Sue Holmes  
Standards and Accreditation Study  
Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
Belconnen ACT 2616

Dear Ms Holmes

Thank you for inviting Geoscience Australia to comment on the study into Standards and Accreditation. The comments attached are related to our activity via the technical committees, of which we have been a member for a number of years.

Regards

Paul Trezise  
Chief Information Officer

1. *The efficiency and effectiveness of standards setting and laboratory accreditation services in Australia*

The rapid development and change within the Information Technology community are a major challenge for setting standards. There can be a significant time delays in the standards development process, meaning some standards are out of date, or worse still, no longer relevant within their industry. Many factors contribute to these delays, but Geoscience Australia's observation is that the lack of human resources ultimately limits the speed and quality of the contribution to the standards process. This limits the effectiveness, currency and value of standards, which could directly affect the authority and credibility of Standards Australia.

Another concern is the adoption of International Standards by Australian Standards. While this is appropriate and ensures Australia is compatible and interoperable with the rest of the world, it does require a commitment by Australia industry and governments to review and participate in the development of these International Standards. Some technical committees are well served by their members, ensuring Australian requirements are considered, but others are not. This affects the overall implementation of these standards.

It is desirable for Australia and Standards Australia to have a more robust system for encouraging participation to ensure a consistency across the standards development program.

2. *The appropriate role for the Australian Government in relation to standard setting and laboratory accreditation*

Currently Geoscience Australia participates in the standards development process as a Chair and committee member, reviewing and providing technical comments to various standards linked with the geospatial and geoscience disciplines. We believe Australian Government agencies such as Geoscience Australia have significant technical knowledge that can contribute to the development of standards within the Australian community. The Australian Government also has an important role, considering issues which may not be apparent to the private sector, such as the development of neutral data exchange formats and languages, the regulation standards requirement within industry and the associated conformance measurement with our trading partners.

Geoscience Australia sees benefits for the Australian Government to continue its role within the standard setting environment, providing strong leadership and confidence in the overall market place.