16th September 2013

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP
PO Box 6022
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Welcome to the Communications Portfolio

Dear Mr Turnbull

On behalf of the Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU) I would like to welcome you to the communications portfolio. You have come to the portfolio at a time where many critical issues need urgent attention and we sincerely welcome someone of your experience and ability.

Firstly, by way of re-introduction, the Internet Society of Australia is an association of organisations and individuals committed to the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet, and is a chapter of the worldwide Internet Society. Our members are users, builders, operators, developers and researchers with extraordinary expertise and keen to remain engaged with the government. Indeed, I wrote to you recently offering our assistance with any new Communications Advisory Council.

The Internet Society of Australia has previously applauded efforts to create a national broadband network, as it will address fundamental issues with competition and of access and quality, and we encourage you to ensure its effective implementation. We would welcome a reorientation of NBN Co's priorities, and are keen to assist with a review of their approaches. We have a number of experts with outstanding experience in all aspects of network design, operation and management.

You may be interested to know that our Society was the first to create and distribute information directed at consumers on the topic – well before NBN Co itself was prepared to communicate with consumers. This guide can be found at:
https://www.isoc-au.org.au/Info/NBN_Guide_for_Consumers.pdf

I now take this opportunity to raise further issues of concern to our membership. The apparent abuse by authorities of the provisions granted under s313 of the Telecommunications Act remain of concern: we contend that such provisions are out of step with community expectations, and lack appropriate controls. Furthermore, we urge you to call an open and transparent inquiry into the need for such measures at all, given their lack of effectiveness. At the very least, immediate provisions are required to stem the encroachment onto legitimate user freedoms on the Internet.

The Internet Is For Everyone
http://www.isoc-au.org.au

In a related issue, the recent inquiry into national security by the Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (JCIS) outlined a number of recommendations to improve the privacy protections, proportionality of interception activity with risk, as well as oversight and reporting. We urge you to take these recommendations on board and to resist efforts to increase the surveillance on Australians using the Internet through metadata retention. Coupled with other revelations on more widespread Internet surveillance, there is growing discomfort within the broad community and we urge your government to reinforce the civil rights and protections for Australian Internet users.

More recently, also, we note that data breach notification legislation remains with the Senate. We urge you to retain such measures as have been proposed.

I would also like to personally thank you for your prompt action in the lead up to the election to refine the Coalition's position on Internet filtering and would be keen to work with you to produce education and other programs suitable for families.

We welcome further opportunity to work with the government to improve the operations of NBN Co and the broader Internet industry to ensure competition, consumer protection and a secure, stable Internet that is affordable and available to all Australians.

About the Internet Society of Australia
The Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU) is a non-profit society founded in 1996 which promotes the Internet development in Australia for the whole community – private, academic and business users: the Internet is for everyone! ISOC-AU is a chapter of the worldwide Internet Society and is a peak body organisation, representing the interests of Internet users in this country. We have a longstanding and ongoing commitment to the effective representation of these interests in legislative and policy review, code development and self-regulatory processes in the telecommunications, domain name and Internet-related services industries.

Yours sincerely,

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