A Significant Achievement

Infonomics welcomes the announcement earlier today that Standards Australia will lead an international working group on corporate governance of information technology.

As many Infonomics Letter readers are aware, I have had the pleasure of participating in the processes for development of standards such as AS8015 and ISO/IEC 38500 for several years.

The decision by the ISO and IEC Joint Technical Committee to create the International Working Group was the climax of a year of work for a diverse group of international experts, who met in Sydney in February and then in Berlin in May to assess the need for, and recommend the most appropriate structures for ongoing management and further development of standards in this field.

While there were many views expressed in the meetings and in related correspondence, it has been clear that corporate governance of information technology is important, and that standardisation will help to remove confusion and improve performance in this vital field.

In these very interesting times, where business confidence and certainty are not assured, it is important to remember that good direction and control of organisations is an essential contributor to longer term stability and performance. Thus it is timely indeed that the recently released ISO/IEC 38500 provides guidance for organisations on how they should behave when directing and controlling their use of IT.

The new Working Group will build on the first flush of achievement that is represented by ISO/IEC 38500. The group will need to work with many other organisations to identify need and opportunity for standardisation in the broad field of corporate governance of IT, and it will need to craft standards and other resources that are constructive rather than restrictive, and that do not add undue administrative or regulatory burden. At the same time, the new Working Group will need to help resolve the burgeoning problem that the word "Governance" has been misused – especially in the context of information technology.

For too long, the market has been confused about "IT Governance" – seeing it as a technology discipline or as a narrowly focused on IT projects. In ISO/IEC 38500 we made a clear distinction between governance and management. In Infonomics view, one of the key tasks for the new

International Working Group is to continue the job of clarifying the difference and building understanding of the relationship between the two activities.

Infonomics looks forward to the International Working Group's birth, and to contributing positively to its ongoing work.

And while that is happening, Infonomics will continue its quest to inform organisations everywhere about the importance of Corporate Governance of IT, and help them ensure that they have effective governance arrangements for their own use of IT.

The text of the Standards Australia press release follows.

Mark Toomey.

20 Nov 2008.

Australia to lead international working group on corporate governance of IT

In recognition of Australia's leadership and expertise in the area of corporate governance of IT, Standards Australia has been appointed secretariat and convenor of a new international working group to drive development and harmonisation of International Standards on corporate governance of IT.

A resolution to establish the working group was approved at the 23rd meeting of ISO/IEC Joint Technical Committee for Information Technology (JTC1) in Nara, Japan on 18 November, 2008.

Reporting directly to JTC1, the primary role of the new working group will be to develop Standards and related documents to assist business leaders with the corporate governance of their IT systems and networks.

Key tasks will include the standardisation and harmonisation of IT terminology and the ongoing maintenance of ISO/IEC 38500, which is based closely on the Australian Standard for Corporate Governance of Information and Communication Technology (AS 8015:2005).

"Opportunities to lead working groups at this level come up rarely. Standards Australia is honoured and excited to be invited to lead this working group which will play a vitally important role in

guiding business leaders throughout the world in the effective governance of their IT activities," said Mr John Tucker, CEO of Standards Australia.

"Australia's appointment to head up this working group is testament to the expertise and knowledge of Standards Australia's IT-030 Committee and we thank Standards New Zealand for initiating a work program on corporate governance of IT at the international level.

"It provides further opportunity for Australia to continue to influence the global IT community in decision-making and development of international IT Standards," he said.

Corporate governance of IT is increasingly recognised by organisational leaders as a critical business activity affecting all businesses, organisations and governments.

"Positioning this new working group at JTC1 level, independent of the broad body of JTC1 subcommittees, reflects the importance of top level attention to directing and controlling the use of IT," said Mark Toomey, Chair of IT-030.

"The IT-030 Committee has achieved tremendous advance. The inaugural Chair Dr Ed Lewis provided vital leadership and focus through the development of AS 8015, and together with Standards New Zealand, made a significant contribution to its subsequent adoption as ISO/IEC 38500.

"Standard Australia's leadership role in this new working group will see Australia continue to provide global leadership in the challenge of ensuring that IT use is effective, efficient and acceptable," he said.

Membership of the working group will be open to all countries who are currently members of JTC1.

Background

JTC1 is a joint effort between ISO and the IEC and is responsible for the development of International Standards for computer-related areas. Key areas of work include IT security, IT governance and harmonisation of IT terminology.

Standards Australia Committee IT-030 *ICT Governance and Management* first initiated a work program focusing on ICT governance and management in 2002. AS 8015 was published in 2005 and attracted international attention. It was the first Standard to deal with corporate governance of IT and it set new benchmarks in ICT governance best practice and professionalism.

In June 2008, the ISO/IEC published ISO/IEC 38500 which is based closely on the Australian Standard, with minor changes. Both Standards set out six principles for good corporate governance of IT.

The original of this Standards Australia Press Release is at: www.standards.org.au/downloads/082011_Aus_to_lead_working_group_on_corporate_governance_of_IT.pdf.

Briefing Slides

People who attend conference events and other briefings sometimes ask for copies of the slides we use. To make it easy, Infonomics is now placing selected slide sets online for free download. Go to www.infonomics.com.au/Events.htm to see recent presentations:

- itSMF Australia conference (An ISO/IEC 38500 Case Study); and

- ACS Victoria Branch Forum (The Gershon Report and IT Governance).

Infonomics Calendar

Through November and December, Infonomics is continuing to ride the currents, developing standards and communicating details of corporate governance of IT globally. December's engagements include:

- 1-2 December: Conference and Half day workshop, Wellington; www.yourconference.info

- 3-5 December: Standards Workgroup meeting, Wellington;

- 9 December: ASL/BiSL Foundation Conference, Netherlands. www.asl-bisl.org/programma08 and www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbBJ8FQfZKY

For more details of your opportunities to join an Infonomics briefing, seminar, workshop or masterclass, please refer to the Events page on www.infonomics.com.au.