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Executive Director
Australian Law reform Commission
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Via email: info@alrc.gov.au

Submission to the review Copyright and the Digital Economy

We are a professional services business working in the area of land development, including the creation of survey plans and other documents that are registered with government bodies.

We strongly oppose the proposals in the ALRC's recent Discussion Paper to repeal the government statutory licence and to introduce a new exception that would allow free use of our plans for public administration. We are also extremely disappointed in the lack of acknowledgement of the surveyors' position in the Discussion Paper.

The repeal of the statutory licence was not sought by anyone. The ALRC's proposals will create an environment of uncertainty which will require litigation to resolve, as even the ALRC acknowledges. The ALRC does not seem to understand the detrimental effects of its proposals for businesses like ours.

It is the advent of digital technologies and the expansion of the digital economy that in many ways have led to the increased commercialisation of subdivision and survey plans by government. State governments now authorise information brokers to sell surveyors plans and other documents to the public from which they both profit. The surveyors who have been recognised as owning the copyright in these plans, traditionally have not.

Surveyors have recently received a determination from the Copyright Tribunal of Australia, which entitles us to a fair share of money received by the NSW government from sale of our plans. It has taken us 16 years to receive recognition of the value of our work and our entitlement to recompense from the commercial sale of our plans. We do not want to stop governments using our plans and we are not seeking payment for every use of our plans by governments, but we think it is fair that we receive a royalty when the government sells our plans.

Yours sincerely,