Opening the Source of Local Software Jobs

Today the Assembly will debate Open Source Software legislation introduced by Roslyn Dundas, which promises to deliver more work to Canberra’s software developers who have demonstrated world leadership in the open source software field.

“Since June this year, the ACT Government has paid almost $15 million to Microsoft for software licence fees. Open source software was available that could have done the job more cheaply and provided local jobs”, Ms Dundas said.

Open source software is usually distributed free of charge, is maintained by communities of software developers rather than corporations, is not privately controlled, and has no secret code.

“Since my Bill was introduced in July, the Stanhope Government has warmed to open source software. The Economic White Paper announced a trial of open source within the ACT Government. The legislation I am proposing goes a step further by requiring the Government to give preference to open source products wherever practicable.”

“The ACT is already a world leader in open source software. IBM’s Linux Research Lab is here in the ACT, and the Samba project that integrates Linux with Windows networks was developed in Canberra. The specialist software created to allow electronic voting in the last ACT Election was a locally developed open source product, and clearly showed how well open source software can do the job.”

“The Government says it wants to promote Canberra’s IT industry. If this Bill passes, it will encourage open-source software producers in the ACT to develop new products suitable for use by the Government, because they will know they have a reasonable chance of winning software tenders.”

“In the United States, the Federal Government and the courts have started tackling the near-monopoly position of Microsoft, but Australia has lagged behind. My Bill is similar to legislation introduced by the Democrats in the Federal Senate, New South Wales, and South Australia to get more competition in the software market.”

“If my Bill passes today, and I expect it will, we will be the first Australian jurisdiction to take this step towards a more diverse and competitive IT environment both here in the ACT, and across Australia”, Ms Dundas concluded.