

# Cloud over certification for cloud computing vendors to clear by 2014

FRAN FOO THE AUSTRALIAN AUGUST 14, 2012 12:00AM

**AUSTRALIA is poised to become one of the first countries in the world to introduce a certification process for cloud computing vendors -- a plan that could come to fruition in 2014.**

The groundwork is being prepared by the National Standing Committee for Cloud Computing, a body established by public policy network Global Access Partners and chaired by Keith Besgrove, who is the first assistant secretary of the digital economy services division for the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

The group is producing a roadmap that's headed towards cloud computing certification, according to committee member Marcus Moufarrige.

The first step was to create a voluntary code of conduct for cloud computing similar to that in New Zealand, he said.

New Zealand's CloudCode provides a framework of voluntary self-regulated disclosures and minimum standards for cloud-based providers there. It is supported by leading players, such as Google and Microsoft and financial contributors to the product include Salesforce.com and online accounting specialist Xero. It is facilitated by the Institute of IT Professionals of New Zealand (formerly the New Zealand Computer Society).

Mr Moufarrige said the aim of such certification was to "create transparency and an environment where people who want to use cloud computing have the choice of risk that they want to take and understand what the vendor is actually offering them".

He expects Australia's cloud computing code of conduct to be completed early next year, followed by certification that would take between 12 and 24 months.

"It (certification) is a very complex area because there's not just the storage of data, but there's the transport of data . . . there's many moving parts," he said.

The code will guide companies selling to a local audience on what "behaviour we'd like them to adhere to", he said.

It would provide clarity in terms of data privacy and security and how those factors were managed. "The next stage is how do we ensure, after being self-policing, that they (vendors) are actually sticking to those promises, and how do we rank them?" Mr Moufarrige said.

Then would come the creation of a risk matrix so potential customers could evaluate where their data should be housed and what security and back-up protocols should be followed, he said.

He expects different levels of certifications to be offered, from government-grade security within a private cloud services to mass-market products like Dropbox, an online storage provider.

"I really believe that if Australian businesses are comfortable in embracing cloud technologies then we're going to have the ability to be very disruptive to those larger economies, particularly developing economies like China and India," Mr Moufarrige said.

Xero Australia managing director Chris Ridd said that, while there was a role for government to play, the cloud computing world was "moving very fast and it is hard for government to keep up with everything and regulate".

Mr Ridd said cloud certification was "certainly something we see as an important step down the track, but in the short term there are some positive and achievable steps we can take as an industry".

According to Mr Ridd, there are a range of initiatives which are important in building consumer and business confidence in cloud solutions, such as vendors openly declaring their financial status to

assuage fears of bankruptcy.

"The first step is working with other cloud providers to agree a series of disclosures so customers/consumers can ask the right sort of questions and make an informed decision about the merits of a particular cloud provider -- from financial stability and security standards to where data is stored, data ownership, and use of data. This is about educating the market and helping prospective customers understand a set of acceptable guidelines."

Mr Ridd said it was in the industry's best interest to drive towards a set of acceptable practices to ensure that disreputable firms or underfunded "cowboys" did not undermine confidence.