



The Hon Karen Andrews MP

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology

MC20-001021

Mrs Giulia Jones MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mrs Jones

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2019 concerning access to Australian Standards adopted in legislation. As you are aware, my department is responsible for managing the Australian Government's relationship with peak standards and conformance bodies. This includes Standards Australia, a non-government not-for-profit body which develops Australian Standards.

It is estimated that one-third of some 5400 Australian Standards are referenced in legislation, with the majority of these references found in state and territory regulation.

Like most developed economies, the provision of standards in Australia is based on a user pays model which supports the development, maintenance and distribution of current and future standards. There is a cost to the development of standards. Industry representatives, government officials and others volunteer their time to contribute to the standards development process. The revenue from the distribution of standards is used by Standards Australia to support its not-for-profit operations. I understand that the charges associated with the purchasing of individual Australian Standards are comparable to those of other countries.

While the Government is unable to direct Standards Australia to make changes to its commercial distribution arrangements, my department has worked with Standards Australia to communicate a desire for the delivery of standards to be based on principles of non-exclusive distribution, flexible digital access and competitive pricing. My department also worked with Standards Australia towards achieving the recommendations in the Council of Australian Government's Industry and Skills Council Standards Accessibility Working Group report. As a result, Standards Australia committed to accessibility principles in its Memorandum of Understanding with Government when it was updated in November 2018.

The standards distribution arrangements in place in Australia have changed significantly since the Standards Accessibility Working Group finalised its report.

On 7 February 2019, Standards Australia announced it was moving beyond the exclusive distribution arrangements it has had with SAI Global since 2003. Techstreet has since been announced as a new service provider. Standards Australia also recently released a new

Distribution and Licensing Policy Framework. Over time, it will see improvements to the price, relevance and reach of Australian Standards. The Framework provides for:

- more distributors selling Australian standards – increasing competition;
- a sponsorship model allowing organisations to fund access to standards;
- providers being able to use Australian Standards integrated into systems and apps;
- improved access to education institutions and students to use standards in teaching materials; and
- the development of plain English guides to support community understanding of what is often highly technical and specialist content.

It remains Government policy that the relevant regulatory authority should consider funding access to standards where referenced in legislation. This should be done on a case-by-case basis, and is often considered through regulatory impact assessment processes. The new distribution arrangements implemented by Standards Australia should also provide greater opportunities to make these standards more accessible to a range of stakeholders.

As you may be aware, access to standards free of charge through the national, state and territory libraries was previously available for non-commercial users. This arrangement has unfortunately been suspended due to unauthorised access and distribution of content. My department has received advice from Standards Australia that they are working towards restoring reading room access to standards in libraries for non-commercial users. In the meantime, Standards Australia will consider providing standards to users where there is a legitimate non-commercial need on an individual basis.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Karen Andrews

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