



The Hon Karen Andrews MP

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology

MC20-037961

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

Dear Mrs Jones

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2020 concerning Australian Standards referenced in Australian Capital Territory (ACT) legislation.

There are no Australian Government plans to negotiate with Standards Australia for free public access to all standards referenced in Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation.

As you were advised in my 31 March 2020 letter to you, the Standards Australia Distribution and Licensing Policy Framework released in December 2019 outlines options for sponsored access and bulk distribution of standards. Sponsored access allows for scenarios where companies, industries or governments may wish to provide improved access to one or a number of Australian Standards to a particular group of users.

I am pleased to say the Government has already partnered with Standards Australia to waive the fee for access to the bushfire construction standard, to support the recovery and rebuilding of communities after recent bushfires.

Given the strong views expressed by your Committee on providing “free, public access” to standards, I encourage you to reach out directly to Standards Australia to discuss possibilities for sponsored access to Australian Standards referenced in ACT legislation.

As you are aware, standards access through National and State libraries was being misused for commercial purposes. An example of this is clearly indicated in your 17 July 2018 letter to Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, then Assistant Minister for Science, Jobs and Innovation, raising concerns that electricians could no longer access electrical standards through these libraries.

My office received a significant amount of correspondence about the cessation of access to Australian Standards through libraries. It was disappointing to see that the majority of this correspondence was from commercial users who had been inappropriately accessing Australian Standards through those channels over several years.

It is appropriate that Standards Australia has taken measures to protect their intellectual property rights and that they continue to do so.

I have been advised that National and State Libraries Australia was close to an agreement to restore a level of on-site access to standards before the onset of COVID-19. This is a matter for negotiation between National and State Libraries Australia, Standards Australia and its distributors. I will not be intervening in those negotiations.

In the absence of access through National and State libraries, Standards Australia has provided an interim provision where it will consider providing access to standards for non-commercial users where there is a need on an individual basis. Interested parties can email mail@standards.org.au and the requests are considered and processed directly by Standards Australia.

As also noted in the Standards Australia Distribution and Licensing Policy Framework, Standards Australia has made a commitment to making standards available for personal, domestic or household (non-commercial) use no later than December 2023. This will likely occur through an online portal managed by Standards Australia where users would register their access for non-commercial use. This will be a significant achievement for Standards Australia to restore this level of online access through systems managed directly by them that adequately protect their intellectual property.

I am pleased to see the ongoing efforts of Standards Australia to refine their business strategy with a view to providing increased products and services to customers.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Andrews', written in a cursive style.

Karen Andrews

1 / 7 / 2020