



**THE HON ED HUSIC MP
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND SCIENCE**

MS22-001602

01 DEC 2022

Ms Susan Templeman MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Templeman

Susan,

Thank you for referring a copy of the petition (Petition Ministerial Referral EN4101) to me and bringing this matter to my attention.

Standards Australia is Australia's national standards body, with responsibility for developing and distributing Australian Standards. It is a non-government, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, governed by a board of directors and its members represent Australia's technical and commercial infrastructure, industry, unions, academia and government. Standards Australia develop standards based on three internationally recognised principles, including openness and transparency, consensus and balance of representation.

As noted in the petition, where a standard is referenced in federal, state and/or territory regulation, businesses are required to purchase the relevant standard(s), on a user pays basis, in order to ensure they operate in compliance with the law. This model compensates Standards Australia for the cost of developing, maintaining and distributing its total catalogue of standards.

The revenue from the distribution of standards is used by Standards Australia to support the committees and processes that bring relevant experts together. Charging for standards is not unique to Australia and is common throughout developed economies. We acknowledge that Australian Industry also make a significant investment in the standards development process, through voluntary contributions of time and expertise.

While the Albanese Government maintains a keen interest in ensuring that Australian standards are developed in a way that delivers a net benefit to the Australian community as a whole, the Government cannot direct Standards Australia on its distribution model or prices.

The Commonwealth continues to raise with Standards Australia the feedback from stakeholders on the cost and access to Australian Standards. Standards Australia are well aware of industry's concerns and has made five commitments to the Commonwealth related to improved standards accessibility, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Standards Australia (section 8.32):

1. Improve the competition in the distribution of standards by supporting multiple channels for distribution;
2. Offer partnership options with Standards Australia to facilitate forms of public access;
3. Develop new innovative channels for accessing standards;
4. Provide greater flexibility in pricing structures; and
5. Provide public access to standards for non-commercial use.

Both Australian and international standards can be purchased via Standards Australia and its distributors (TechStreet and SAI Global). Between 2003 and 2019, Standards were distributed in Australia exclusively by SAI Global, a company initially listed on the ASX and then owned by Baring Asia Limited, a private equity organisation. In 2019, Standards Australia appointed Techstreet as their second distributor. In 2021, Standards Australia launched their own channel to market through the Standards Australia Store. The Commonwealth has welcomed Standard Australia's efforts to move towards multiple channels for distribution, as a means of ensuring increased competition in the distribution of standards. I understand from Standards Australia that they continue to assess other potential distributors under their Distribution and Licensing Policy Framework.

Standards Australia recently released Small Business Sets to combine commonly referenced documents across select industries into a single package, with a variety of subscription terms. Standards Australia have advised that they are working with other third-party organisations to develop further innovations in the distribution of standards, including using mobile apps, and are exploring different pricing models. Standards Australia has committed to providing free access to its content for personal, domestic and household use by December 2023.

I am assured by Standards Australia that they remain committed to improving standards accessibility, including through digital content, as outlined in the MoU, which will ensure that their products meet the expectations of many more users. I wish to emphasise that the Government continues to advocate for the interests of Australian industry and engage closely with Standards Australia on the matter of cost and access to Australian standards.

Thank you again for bringing the concerns raised in this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Ed Husic MP