

Briefing note

National Competition Policy Analysis 2025 – Productivity Commission

What is at stake – key discussion points

1. The value of your contributions

Standards Australia's system relies on contributions from over 6,500 committee members and hundreds of nominating organisations. These experts ensure that standards are fit-for-purpose, reflect Australian conditions, and are aligned with regulatory and industry needs.

Any move to automatically adopt overseas standards risks devaluing this expert input, sidelining the voices of industry, government, and community in determining what is right for Australia.

2. Sovereign decision-making

Overseas standards may be technically sound, but they are developed in different legal, environmental, and policy contexts. Automatically adopting them could mean ceding Australia's sovereign right to assess what works best for our economy, environment, and safety systems — despite the Australian Government formally recognising Standards Australia as the nation's peak standards body under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

3. A level playing field for standards

Standards Australia is rightly held to high expectations of transparency, consensus, and open public consultation. We support this approach. However, if overseas-developed standards are allowed into regulation without equivalent governance or review, it creates a two-tiered system that favours speed over scrutiny, and undermines trust in the regulatory process, and places quality and the safety of Australians at risk.

4. The future of global influence

International standards are not just technical documents, they are instruments of geopolitical influence. As global rulemaking accelerates in critical sectors like AI, clean energy, and infrastructure, Australia must preserve its ability to contribute, shape, and selectively adopt global standards that align with our national interest. Weakening our domestic standards process risks weakening our global voice, and potentially our national security.

What reform should look like

Standards Australia supports the goals of the NCP — but reform must be done the right way. We think that means:

1. Strengthening domestic harmonisation first

National alignment of regulated standards across states and territories should be the priority. The biggest inefficiencies lie in internal fragmentation, not in whether a standard is international or local.

2. Maintaining expert oversight and validation

Australia already has a strong rate of international standards adoption following an assessment of their appropriateness for local conditions, safety and quality requirements. This assessment is based on input from technical experts and affected stakeholders. That process should not be bypassed.

3. Applying consistent rules to all standards

If other standards bodies (including overseas SDOs) are to have their content adopted into regulation, their documents must meet the same transparency, consultation, and scrutiny as standards developed or adopted through Standards Australia committees.