

idec Solutions Pty Ltd

Murarie, QLD, 4172

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Attention: Productivity Commission – Safeguard Action

RE: Safeguard submission into import of fabricated structural steel

1. Business Overview

idec Solutions Pty Ltd (*idec*) is a Queensland-based SME offering integrated design, construction, steel fabrication, remote infrastructure, steel detailing, and rigging services. Operating from Murarie in Southeast Queensland. The business has served Australian construction including infrastructure sectors for over 30 years across government, defence and private sector projects.

Since the COVID-19 period of 2019-2021, *idec* has experienced a significant and sustained reduction in structural steel fabrication throughput. In response, *idec* has been compelled to pivot toward alternative markets and service offerings to maintain operational viability. This has led to under-utilisation of fabrication assets and a reduction in steel fabrication worker numbers.

2. Evidence of an Import Surge

idec has observed a marked increase in the importation of fabricated structural steel over the period 2019 to present. This has been particularly evident in the commercial and industrial building segments, including warehousing, logistics facilities, and retail developments. *idec*'s project portfolio ten (10) years ago compared with today is significantly different, as we have had to take on increasingly complex, bespoke, challenging and risky projects. Gone are the days of fabricating and erecting portal frame warehouses around Australia profitably.

The viability of a potential project to be '*imported*' is a key factor in determining whether *idec* will tender a project. Unless there is a key differentiating factor, such as increased complexity, quality standards (including AS5131 CC3 status), project requirements or client preference for local content, *idec* cannot compete on price with projects that leverage cheaper, non-compliant imported structural steel. Projects that would previously have been fabricated domestically are now routinely sourced from overseas suppliers, reducing the volume of work available to local

fabricators and the broader network of suppliers, tradespeople, and contractors that support them.

The pricing of imported fabricated steel has consistently undercut domestically produced equivalents by a substantial margin. This price differential has influenced procurement decisions by head contractors, who have shifted to imported products based on cost rather than quality, compliance, or delivery reliability. Tender feedback is in line with the “*If you're cheap enough, nothing else matters*”

In addition to fabricated steel from privately funded projects moving offshore, *idec* has observed major government infrastructure projects with clear local content requirements being sent offshore. *Idec references* major infrastructure projects in Southeast Queensland where the vast majority of fabricated structural steel was imported. The project cited a lack of domestic capability to meet the demand for the project; however, we received no consultation or opportunity to tender for the works. *How can industry grow to meet local demand if we are not given the opportunity to do so?*

3. Evidence of Injury

idec confirms that sustained import pressure has materially affected its structural steel fabrication operations since 2019. The key indicators of injury are as follows:

- **Reduced fabrication throughput:** Structural steel fabrication volumes have declined significantly since 2019, driven by the loss of projects to lower-priced imported alternatives.
- **Business pivot required:** To sustain operations, *idec* has been required to redirect resources and capability toward alternative markets and service lines. This pivot, represents a loss of domestic structural steel fabrication capacity.
- **Workforce and investment implications:** The reduction in fabrication work has constrained *idec's* ability to invest in equipment, training, and workforce development within its steel fabrication operations.

These impacts are directly attributable to cheap import competition. Demand for construction and infrastructure projects in Southeast Queensland has remained relatively strong over the corresponding period; however, an increasing share of the fabrication work associated with

those projects has been captured by overseas suppliers. Leading to reduced domestic volumes despite an increase in fabricated steel requirements.

4. Productivity Implications

The persistent threat of low-cost import competition has limited *idec's* ability to commit to long-term capital investment in its fabrication operations. Investments in modern welding technology, automation, and facility upgrades are difficult to justify when the pipeline of fabrication work is uncertain, and margins are compressed by import pricing. *Why would idec choose to invest in products and process improvements to optimise for simple, high volume steel products if we know that cheap imports undermine domestic steel fabrication sustainability?*

If a temporary safeguard measure were imposed, *idec* would consider reinvesting in its structural steel fabrication capability, including equipment upgrades and expanded apprenticeship and training programmes. A more predictable competitive environment would enable the business to plan with greater confidence and pursue productivity improvements.

5. Structural Implications

idec's experience illustrates a broader structural risk facing the Australian fabricated steel sector. When established, capable fabricators are compelled to exit or significantly reduce their industry participation, the consequences extend well beyond the individual business:

- **Supply chain erosion:** Reduced domestic fabrication volumes flow through to local steel product suppliers, processors, protective coatings, transport operators, and subcontractors who depend on this work.
- **Skills and capability loss:** Skilled boilermakers, welders, and steel detailers are being lost to other sectors. Rebuilding this workforce capability, once lost, takes years and significant investment in training and apprenticeships.
- **Sovereign capability:** Australia's ability to deliver critical infrastructure—including defence, health, education, and transport projects—depends on maintaining a viable domestic steel fabrication sector. Over-reliance on imported fabricated steel introduces supply chain risk, quality and compliance concerns, and longer lead times.

Conclusion

idec strongly supports the imposition of a temporary safeguard measure on imported fabricated structural steel. Such a measure would provide the domestic industry with the “breathing space” necessary to stabilise, reinvest, and pursue productivity improvements. It would also help preserve the skilled workforce, supply chain relationships, and sovereign manufacturing capability that are essential to Australia’s long-term infrastructure needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and are willing to provide further information to support the Safeguard Action as required.

Sincerely,

Glenn Gibson
CEO, idec Solutions