

Submission to the Productivity Commission

Safeguards Inquiry into Fabricated Structural Steel Imports



Instant Steel Solutions Pty Ltd

| Director



Executive Summary

This submission provides a supply-chain perspective on the role of imports within the Australian fabricated structural steel market.

The increase in imports reflects a structural market shift during COVID-19, particularly driven by significant domestic price escalation and supply constraints. Imports now play a critical role in maintaining supply, supporting project delivery timelines and preserving cost competitiveness.

Anti-dumping and safeguard measures increase costs to end users, reduce competition and risk exacerbating inflationary pressures. Import data must be interpreted in the context of end-use sectors, particularly major infrastructure projects and mining demand.

Industry pressures are multi-factorial, with labour shortages, cost structures and productivity constraints representing primary drivers. Safeguard measures are unlikely to address these root causes and may result in broader negative economic outcomes.

1. Introduction

Instant Steel Solutions Pty Ltd is an Australian supplier and importer of steel products, including fabricated structural steel, servicing commercial, industrial, residential and infrastructure sectors.

We operate across both domestic and international supply chains, providing direct insight into pricing dynamics, procurement behaviour, supply constraints and delivery requirements.

Our submission reflects a whole-of-supply-chain perspective.



2. Market Context – Structural Shift Since COVID-19

During COVID-19, domestic steel pricing increased materially, in many cases doubling over a short period. Supply chain disruptions constrained local availability while project demand remained strong.

This resulted in imports becoming commercially viable at scale and established a hybrid global supply model that remains embedded in the Australian market.

3. Import Trends

Imports of fabricated structural steel have increased in recent years.

This reflects a rational market response to domestic pricing, supply constraints and evolving procurement practices. Imports are now a core component of supply rather than a temporary disruption.

4. Drivers of Import Growth

The increase in imports is driven by structural factors including domestic cost pressures, labour and overhead costs, procurement requirements for certainty and limitations in domestic supply access.

5. Industry Conditions

Industry pressures are multi-factorial and include labour shortages, rising wages, industrial relations complexity and productivity constraints.

Imports are one contributing factor but do not fully explain current industry conditions.



6. Impact of Trade Measures

Anti-dumping and safeguard measures increase costs to end users, reduce competitive tension and contribute to inflationary pressure across construction and infrastructure sectors.

These measures transfer cost rather than resolving underlying issues.

7. Interpretation of Import Data

Import data must be assessed in context. Significant volumes relate to major projects and mining demand, which often require imports due to capacity constraints, specialised requirements and delivery timelines.

Failure to segment data risks misrepresenting the role of imports.

8. Public Interest Considerations

A whole-of-economy perspective is required.

Safeguards risk increasing infrastructure costs, reducing housing affordability, constraining supply chains and delaying projects. Restricting imports may amplify inflationary pressures.

9. Structural Policy Considerations

Policy responses should focus on skilled labour migration, improved domestic supply access and investment in productivity and technology to address structural challenges.

10. Limitations of Safeguards

Safeguards do not address labour shortages, cost structures or productivity gaps and should be viewed as short-term interventions rather than long-term solutions.



11. Provisional Measures

Provisional measures risk disrupting projects, increasing costs mid-contract and creating supply chain uncertainty. Market stability is critical.

12. Conclusion

The increase in imports reflects structural market evolution.

Safeguards increase costs, reduce competition and fail to address root causes. A more effective policy response would focus on labour availability, supply chain efficiency and domestic competitiveness.

Instant Steel Solutions can provide further detailed commercial data and project-specific examples to the Commission on a confidential basis if required.

Regards

Director