



National Competition Policy Analysis 2025: National Standards

June 2025

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About the ETU

The Electrical Trades Union of Australia ('the ETU')¹ is the principal union for electrical and electrotechnology tradespeople and apprentices in Australia, representing well over sixty-thousand workers around the country.

The ETU welcomes the opportunity to make submissions on the role of Standards Australia and the process of the development of Australian Standards and adoption of international standards inclusive of the review and editing of international standards to the Australian context particularly in relation to electrotechnology.

ETU members make up a critical pillar of the licensed electrical workforce responsible for the installation and compliance of electrical installations and infrastructure. Strong Australian Standards, including the adoption of International Standards that reflect the Australian context, our legislation and wiring systems are critical to maintain the safety and compliance of electrical installations, the generation facilities, transmission and distribution networks.

Acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, the ETU acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples today.

Australian Standards

Standards Australia, with input from the ETU and other technical experts from across the electrotechnology industry, plays an essential role in the development of Australian Standards that meet our context and wiring systems. The governing document in electrotechnology is AS/NZS 3000 the wiring rules. This document has been developed over many years and is referenced in state and territory legislation. The wiring rules have been developed, reviewed and edited over many interactions relevant to the Australian wiring systems and considering emerging technologies and international standards.

Standards Australia assesses international standards for relevance and suitability in the Australian context. This process benefits industry, regulators, technological advancement and safety outcomes.

Standards Australia actively participates, through technical experts, in the International Electrotechnology Commission (IEC) and other international bodies to bring world leading international standards to Australia. This engagement ensures that Australian standards and/or international standards adapted or directly adopted bring the latest safety, technological advancement and efficiency in fields such as electric vehicles infrastructure, renewable energy and energy storage.

The assessment of international standards for the Australian context (our unique physical and regulatory environment) ensures that international standards are not used unsafely or

¹ Being a division of the CEPU, a trade union registered under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* (Cth).

inappropriately and take into account how a standard should be adapted to suit our:

- Climatic conditions and bushfire risk
- Electrical safety regulatory regime
- High temperatures and UV exposure

Standards Australia Operates a transparent, consensus-based process involving industry experts, regulators, engineers, employer associations, unions and consumer groups. Regular reviews of standards ensure consistency with technological advancement, latest safety knowledge and regulations.

The Standards Australia assessment process of international standards provides a National reference point for regulators who often adopt reference to standards in legislation and Facilitates Safe technological adoption providing clear regulatory pathways for manufacturers and installers.

Example:

AS/NZS 4777.2 (Grid connection of energy systems via inverters) ensures that home solar systems interact safely with the grid.

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).

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.

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

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 Standards Development Organisations) 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.

4. Ensure affordability of Australian Standards to those that rely on them such as electrical workers Standards are prohibitively expensive and amendments to standards and republishing after review dictate the need to repurchase the whole standard in many cases.

Examples:

AS/NZS 60079.14:2022

Explosive atmospheres, Part 14: Design selection, erection and initial inspection (IEC 60079-14:2013 (ED.5.0) MOD)

AS/NZS 60079.14:2022 adopts IEC 60079 14, setting out the specific requirements for the design, selection, erection and initial inspection of electrical installations in, or associated with, explosive atmospheres. Applies to all electrical equipment including fixed, portable, transportable and personal, and installations, permanent or temporary. Single Price \$306.

AS/NZS 60079.17:2017

Explosive atmospheres, Part 17: Electrical installations inspection and maintenance (IEC 60079-17:2013 (ED.5.0) MOD). Single Price \$204.

AS/NZS 3012:2019

Electrical installations - Construction and demolition sites. Single Price \$203.

AS/NZS 3000:2018

Electrical installations (known as the Australian/New Zealand Wiring Rules). Single Price \$250.

The ETU recommends that any Australian Standards that are required by regulation, building codes, or otherwise represent an enforceable outcome should be freely accessible to those trades/vocations required to apply them.