

## **Adoption of standards from elsewhere**

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### **Generally – advantages**

I am on two standards committees and have been so for many years. Adoption of standards from elsewhere comes up from time to time. I do not see the general advantage to the community of adoption of standards from elsewhere. Not because of technical content, which needs evaluation on a case by case basis; it might be good, bad or indifferent. Or because we are fundamentally unique “Aussie tough for Aussie conditions” (see more notes elsewhere). But because the advantage as a broad strategy is obscure.

### **Regulation references**

There are thousands of Australian standards. Few are mentioned in regulations. It is no more difficult for regulators to reference a standard from another place. And the standard so referenced is no more or less available to the community.

### **Availability and cost**

Availability and cost to Australians does not improve by adoption. Australian standards and those from other places are both available at cost and online. Adoption does not nowadays improve access. At one time perhaps it did. Picture a time decades past. Libraries and technical bookshops probably featured Australian standards more so than those from elsewhere. Adoption of a standard might have brought it into that space. But it no longer applies. Australian standards are expensive and online just like the original. If we had say government funded free standards then that would be a different matter because adoption would therefore enhance availability.

**Government funded standards access<sup>1</sup>.**

"Free" Australian standards. Although perhaps the potential is "freely available". It could be useful to promote better application. Should they be free, could they be free?

What would it take?

Standards Australia Limited is a charity. Its annual report shows that it gained \$43,161,000 of royalty income last year.

If a donor would donate that much per year, or the taxpayer would donate that much, about \$1.60 for each person, presumably standards could be "free" or "freely available" however it should be said.

**"Aussie tough for Aussie conditions" – are we that unique?<sup>2</sup>**

"Aussie tough for Aussie conditions." It is an advertising slogan that appears to be able to applied to anything. The emphasis is about local customization, fit for purpose. I expect the identical products are said to be perfectly suited to other places.

What is the relevance of "Australian" to technical standards? Or any place for that matter. I just happen to be in Australia.

Broadly the options for standard setting are (a) local standards, (b) adoption of standards from other places with or without amendments or (c) silence, leaving users to turn wherever they see fit.

Development of a local standard, option (a), makes sense where there isn't one, the other standards are outdated for some reason, or conditions are sufficiently different. "Standard for Boxing Gloves for Kangaroos" is unlikely to be developed outside Australia.

Adoption, option (b), on the face of it makes sense where another standard already suits the local circumstances. It saves time writing a local one. Cut and paste. For instance standards in ground handling equipment for air transport will be closely related to aircraft themselves. Standards exist. Aircraft are an international device. Those here will be similar to elsewhere. It makes sense that there would be a good match

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<sup>1</sup> From my LinkedIn post on the topic:

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/johnculvenor\\_3df88f57-39af-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d-96207bb0-activity-7253997741226262528-GvUH/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/johnculvenor_3df88f57-39af-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d-96207bb0-activity-7253997741226262528-GvUH/)

<sup>2</sup> This is the text of my blog post on the topic:

<https://safedesign.wordpress.com/2021/03/17/technical-standards-aussie-tough-for-aussie-conditions/>

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between the ground handling gear. There might be local variations say reflecting weather. But by and large that sort of thing could be a candidate for adoption. But to what end? Does it mean that the mobile stairs, carts, container handling equipment is now “Aussie tough for Aussie conditions” simply because an otherwise identical document has AS on the front?

Does method (b) achieve anything that (c) does not? What difference is there in reality? The design of a product according to the common law framework must reflect the state of knowledge. The user must use whatever is most instructive regardless. Many of the statutory frameworks in Australia such as workplace health and turn back to common law “fit for purpose”. This too necessitates an examination of the state of knowledge. Nations, states and counties have boundaries drawn on maps by kings and queens, parliaments, wars and treaties. But knowledge does not stop at these arbitrary lines on the ground.

Knowledge does not have a boundary.



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