

21 April 2006

## REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STANDARDS AUSTRALIA LIMITED AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TESTING AUTHORITIES

The Building Designers Association of NSW (BDA) has a good working relationship with Standards Australia and has had a representative on a number of committees developing and reviewing building products and practices. The BDA values this relationship and is keen to see it grow and develop in the future.

The BDA is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this review and would like to raise the following points for consideration.

- Cost of Standards – In the building trade there are a large number of Standards covering many areas of construction and building products and as a Building Designer we need access to these Standards. The cost in acquiring all these Standards is prohibitive especially for small practices. Consideration needs to be given to more innovative and cost effective methods of making the Standards available to customers.
- Difficulties in knowing which standards are required. - The Building Code of Australia lists all Standards it requires however there are other building Standards not covered by the BCA that we must know. In some cases the BCA refers to older versions of standards as it judges later versions are inadequate which then leads to confusion – which standard is legally correct?
- Upgrades or revision of Standard not widely advertised. – Too often a standard becomes obsolete yet the purchaser is not advised of upgrades. They become out of date and we are expected to purchase a complete new standard. Large firms and Councils subscribe to Australian Standards packages to over come this problem but subscription is too expensive for many small offices.
- While there is an Australian Standard for most products there is not a statutory requirement that each product must comply with the relevant Standard.

It is considered that the points raised above affect many building practitioners and are not necessarily limited to members of the BDA. As the Standards are now available to download on the Internet we would like to see a reduction in costs. This, in our view, is especially important to BDA members and other building practitioners who are required to access large numbers of standards. Consideration could be given to free access to Standards as reference material where the whole standard may not be required. One or two pages may be all that is needed so why purchase or download the whole document. Through the Internet we can access Federal and State laws and regulations for free. Most Councils provide free access to Local Environment Plans and Development Control Plans via their websites, our requests are not unreasonable.

Standards Australia needs to provide open and more flexible access to **all** Standards, so that everyone required to use them is able to access them at a reasonable cost.