

Eastern Solar Design
PO Box 1138
Taree NSW 2430

Sue Holmes
Productivity Commission
Canberra ACT

Dear Ms Holmes

Re Study into Australia's Standards and Laboratory Accreditation Bodies.

I wish to submit comments to the Study in relation to the Standards Association of Australia and the documents they publish.

My name is Alan Smith. I am a Building Designer working in rural New South Wales. I have been involved in the Building and Construction industry for the past 25 years and prior to that in engineering related fields for a further 15 years. During this time, but more particularly in the time involved in Building and Construction, access to Australian Standards has always been a requirement of my work.

To be able to operate at a competent and successful level, it is imperative to possess knowledge of what standards are available as well as the content of the standards. Unfortunately a library of old standard is not like a library full of first editions. They are useless and non-deemable when they are updated. Having access to the most recent versions and the latest amendments is critical, particularly in these litigious times.

Much of the 'hawking' for business when new standards are released makes much of the 'investment' in learning how to apply and interpret the standards. There is no investment when the standard is replaced. There is no credit for past purchases of earlier editions. It money spent has to be re-spent and quite often in larger amounts.

How is this process good for our industry? I am sure the amount of money required to research, test, edit, debate, analyse and publish Australian Standards is not an insignificant amount. But, so is the amount of money that is required of each and every competent practitioner within the industry, from the roof tile through to the builder; to the designer and the supplier of the products and processes that are often the subject of the standards. All require access to the latest amendments of the standards. Many of those who purchase the documents also contribute in a significant, and voluntary, fashion to their creation by way of committees, contributions, submissions, etc. There is no profit for them from the eventual sale of the standards. It seems the only beneficiary is Standards Australia itself.

This study now has the opportunity to correct this major cost burden of ALL industries, not just mine. A system of cheap, reliable and quick and easy access to Australian Standards is required. The uptake of web-based procedures has been startling. Online access to ALL standards is a must, and it must be reasonably priced – or free for solely online access. This is the trend and it is a wonderful resource.

Government legislation is available online for free. If one choses to have a bound, hardcopy of legislation, it is available for a fee. With broadband connection there is no longer the need to have an office-based copy of the EP&A Act for New South Wales as a link to the NSW government website can give you the latest version within 20 seconds – and it doesn't matter that I am in regional NSW and not 'maincity'. It is fair and equitable access for all. This is how Standards Australia should have their product – available to all and free for online access. Training and hardcopy products would still be required and these would attract fees – probably higher than currently set – but industry needs access to the latest information and it should be freely available as a national resource.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments, I remain

Yours sincerely

Alan Smith