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Submission to Productivity Commission on Standards and Accreditation Study.

I am a Building Designer and a Licensed Builder I have been involved in Architectural Design and Building for the past 41 years.

To be able to carry out work in this area it is necessary to have a knowledge of the required Standards relating to the Building Industry which are also referenced in Specifications which accompany a Building Contract and also called up by the BCA.

It has remained a frustration for me and fellow Building Designers and Builders at the cost of clear ACCESS to Standards, which continually update and become redundant, some annually. This cost is also compounded many times to the Home/Building owners in the form of higher overheads, hence higher fees, by the need for all Building Professionals to have access to these documents.

Being a sole trader as most Building Designers are, with a limited budget standards tend not to get renewed which is regrettable. The issues I have with standards and the BCA are as follows.

1. The Standards are continually changing so if you purchase a Standard this year it may well be out of date by the following year due to revisions. In fact if you purchase the BCA on disc it has an inbuilt time line of one year after which time it switches off and you can't access it.
2. There should be a free access to Australian Standards. Standards by their nature, are the minimum standard that is expected by society for the system the Standard is referring to and which the activity should perform at.
3. Building Industry Professionals and indeed Owner Builders and Home Handyman or any person wishing to carry out building works in any sphere should have open, easy access to Standards they are expected to comply with. It is therefore essential for the preservation of Standards that they be made accessible to all. They should be available freely on a government website where as required they can be continually kept up dated. It is just not acceptable for any Trades Person or any Professional not to be able to afford access to Standards.
4. Therefore the result of the exorbitant cost of Standards and the BCA is that these documents remain locked up only to be accessed by those financially able to afford them, the cost of a set of Building Standards and the BCA is in excess of

\$1500 perhaps annually to keep up to date. They are not performing as “Standards” but as “Exclusives”, for large practitioners able to afford them.

I propose the following to this Review of Standards :-

That all standards not only building standards be floated on a common website that is kept up to date so "all" can easily access via the Internet freely and if you want a printed you pay a fee.

Local Councils are now doing this with LEPs etc and this works well for the Building Industry.

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Regards

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