

STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

End-to-end Review

Final Report - January 2026

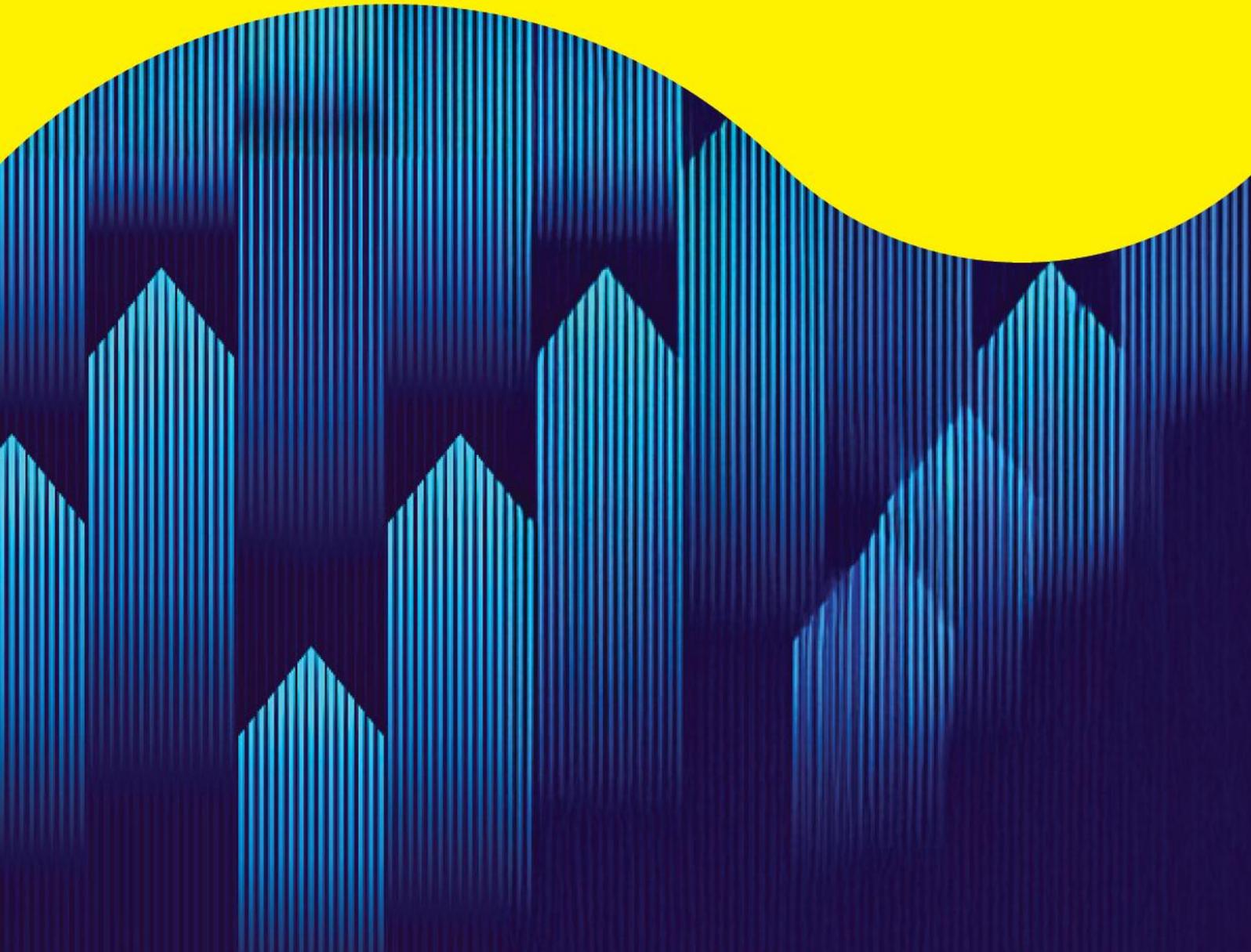


Table of Contents

1. Standards Australia Preface	3
2. Executive Summary	4
3. Background and purpose of review	6
4. Consultation undertaken	7
5. General Observations & Themes	9
6. Core Recommendations	12
7. Implementation approach	21
8. Concluding comments	22

This report has been prepared by Gareth Dando, of Exigeant Advisory for Standards Australia. The report and the information contained within may not be shared or reproduced in any form without the written permission of Standards Australia.

1. Standards Australia Preface

Standards Australia commissioned this end-to-end review of its standards development process so that it remains fit for purpose in a rapidly changing environment. The context in which standards are developed and used is evolving, shaped by technological disruption, geopolitical uncertainty, accelerating innovation cycles, increasing regulatory complexity and heightened expectations around transparency, relevance and public value. At the same time, external reform opportunities, including those recommended by Treasury, the Productivity Commission National Competition Policy and broader productivity and regulatory efficiency initiatives, underscore the importance of a future focused standards system that supports competitiveness while serving the Australian national interest.

The review reflects a deliberate and timely examination of how standards are developed across their full lifecycle, from proposal through to publication and maintenance. Its purpose is not incremental adjustment, but to test whether current approaches continue to support the relevance, credibility and sustainability of the standards development process, particularly as emerging sectors, digital tools and international alignment become increasingly central to Australia's economic and regulatory landscape.

Standards Australia welcome the nine core recommendations set out in this report and is committed to working internally and with our stakeholders on how they can be best implemented. Taken together, they provide a clear and coherent direction for strengthening the effectiveness, transparency and resilience of the standards development system, while recognising the importance, diversity and complexity of the committees, stakeholders and sectors involved.

Standards Australia would like to sincerely thank the many stakeholders who contributed their time, expertise and candid feedback throughout the consultation process. The insights provided by committee members, Nominating Organisations, government agencies, industry bodies and other participants were thoughtful, constructive and grounded in a shared commitment to the value of standards. We also acknowledge the leadership of the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) and the Board of Standards Australia in supporting this review.

The report contains a significant number of recommendations, reflecting both the breadth of feedback received and the complexity of the standards development ecosystem. Implementation will be prioritised and staged over time, recognising that meaningful change cannot be delivered overnight. Where specific recommendations have implications for Nominating Organisations, committee members or other parties, Standards Australia will engage with those groups ahead of implementation with the aim of ensuring changes are well understood, practical and proportionate to stakeholder needs.

Collectively, the recommendations support a clear strategic intent: to improve the ease of doing business with Standards Australia for contributors, Nominating Organisations, government and Members, and to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of standards development in ways that both enhance established industries and proactively respond to emerging trends. This review marks an important step in that transition and

2. Executive Summary

This independent review, commissioned in August 2025, aims to ensure Standards Australia's development processes are modern, inclusive, and responsive—supporting high-quality outcomes across all sectors. Following on from the recent launch of Standards Australia's FY26–30 Strategy: FIT for the Future, its timing is opportune in an environment of accelerating economic, geopolitical, and technological change. Its recommendations present a timely case for action to ensure Australia's standards system is fit-for-purpose and continues to play its vital role in underpinning the country's competitiveness, innovation, and safety.

Consultation & Analysis

An extensive stakeholder consultation exercise revealed an overwhelmingly positive perspective on the importance of and development of standards, with numerous suggestions for improvement.

- Many concerns centred on committee operations, in particular speed of standards development, inadequacy of IT systems, inconsistency of support from Standards Australia, and inappropriate behaviour and conflicts of interest in committees.
- The composition of standards committees was also raised frequently, particularly limitations imposed by the current system of Nominating Organisations, under- and over-representation of some stakeholder interests, and stakeholder-nominee misalignment.

An analysis of the standards development process, as a whole, highlighted a mismatch between the inherent complexity of leading and managing heterogenous standards committees and a relatively light-touch approach to project management founded on administrative support and consistency. The development of standards necessarily relies on the generosity of large numbers of technical experts for its viability, and project management must therefore respond to the inherent complexity of ad hoc resources.

- Key aspects of team and inter-personal dynamics, such as trust building, conflict management, commitment and accountability, are far harder to establish
- These difficulties are compounded by several other standards-specific factors. As a result, the current process falls short of best project management practice.

The high degree of stakeholder participation and engagement ensures community consensus in support of new standards, which reinforces their validity and uptake. This beneficial impact of the Nominating Organisation system outweighs its disadvantages, making it a system to build on and improve.

The rising capabilities of AI offer future potential for significant efficiency gains in the labour-intensive and time-consuming aspects of the process, hence changes to standards development must be positioned to take advantage of these developments.

Recommendations

The review recommends a fundamental change in Standards Australia’s approach to project management, taking end-to-end accountability for the conduct of committees and their outcomes. This will include setting each committee up for success, ensuring the provision of clear committee leadership, actively managing the people and dynamics within the committee (not just its progress), and acting as arbitrator when needed, not just facilitator.

9 core recommendations enable and build on this foundation:

		Impact for:		
		Board/SDAC	Management	Stakeholders
1	Overall approach: switch from administrative support to active management of the standards development process and its committees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2	Provide senior committee leadership support, in partnership with committee Chairs - New “SA Lead” role with industry knowledge and leadership skills		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3	Set up committees for success - Actively influence the composition of committees to optimise the team for the job		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Optimise the drafting process for efficiency - Better digital tools, accelerated drafting, and early resolution of contentious issues		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Strengthen and deepen Nominating Organisation partnerships - Inclusion in 3-way communication and dialogue, responsibility for ballot voting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Stricter enforcement of behavioural code of conduct, and management of conflicts of interest		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Stimulate participation and support participants - Support for Chairs, including peer development - Forums for wider participation and pathways into standards ecosystem		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Strategic agenda on competitiveness, innovation and international standards setting - Align to national priorities and competitiveness; innovation via Alternative Pathway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Enhance process governance and accountability - Service Level Agreements and audits of committee performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Implementing these changes will take time, and many committees are currently operating effectively with little need for urgent change. These recommendations should therefore be thought of as describing a future operating model for Standards Australia, one which the organisation can evolve towards, rather than a blueprint for immediate action across the board with all committees. However, several of them can be implemented immediately to deliver rapid improvements.

3. Background and Purpose of Review

As Australia's peak national standards body, Standards Australia is responsible for developing and maintaining technical standards that serve the public interest. It does so in partnership with industry, government, and consumers. Standards must reflect local needs while aligning with international practices, particularly under our obligations as a signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

Recognising the need to adapt and improve, Standards Australia has commissioned an independent review of its end-to-end development process. This review is jointly backed by the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) and the Board of Standards Australia.

The purpose of the review was to ensure our processes are modern, inclusive, and responsive supporting high-quality outcomes across all sectors, including those that are emerging or undergoing significant transformation.

The review focused on the full lifecycle of standards development, and policies and procedures within the scope of SDAC, including:

- Identification, initiation and prioritisation of standards proposals
- End-to-end workflows, timelines, decision points, and quality assurance
- Committee structures, composition, governance, and integrity
- Stakeholder engagement and public consultation
- Role and structure of the Standards Development team
- Integration of digital tools, including the potential role of AI
- Benchmarking against international practices
- Obligations under WTO agreements, including alignment to international and overseas standards (developed by national or regional organisations, i.e. CEN/CENELEC, ASTM, CSA), and national reform agenda

The review was led by Gareth Dando, an experienced strategy consultant, innovation expert, and artificial intelligence (AI) specialist. Gareth brings over 35 years of international experience, including senior roles with the Boston Consulting Group, LEK, and OC&C. He has worked extensively in organisational transformation, standards development, and technology-led innovation, and previously advised Standards Australia on innovation and process redesign.

4. Consultation Undertaken

An extensive stakeholder consultation exercise was undertaken during September and October 2025.



8 open public consultation sessions were held, 6 in-person in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra, and 2 online. Additionally, over 20 individual or small-group discussions took place with major stakeholders, including Nominating Organisations, government departments, committee Chairs and long-term committee members. A further 30 written submissions were received, varying in scope from concise emails to multi-page reports.

As a general observation, contributors to the consultation process displayed an overwhelmingly positive perspective on the importance of and development of standards and were willing to make numerous constructive observations with the current process and suggestions to improve it.

Of the issues and suggestions raised in the consultation, many of the most frequently noted related to committee functioning, in particular the:

- slow speed of the overall standards development process;
- inadequacy and complexity of current IT systems;
- inconsistency in quality and continuity of support from Standards Australia; and
- persistence of inappropriate behaviour and unidentified or unresolved conflicts of interest in committees.

It was well-recognised that the reliance of standards development on part-time, volunteer experts inevitably contributing to a much slower process than a typical document writing project, with times to completion typically more than a year. However, many stakeholders expressed frustrations that the process can take longer than necessary, due to ineffective management or process inefficiencies such as turnaround delays and administrative re-work.

Digital tools were a major cause for concern, exacerbating frustrations about the process itself. In particular, the lack of a shared drafting tool where committee members could work collectively on the same document, was repeatedly raised as a major issue. Most contributors were already accustomed to this type of tool in their daily work, and reverting to manually combining separately edited drafts collated by email was seen as a major impediment to productivity. Simple tasks such as user authentication and sign-on were also identified as significant pain-points, combining with the complexity of multiple different required tools to discourage and inhibit effective participation.

Standards Australia was seen as providing administrative support and progress management for the standards development process, leaving leadership to the committees and, in particular, the committee Chairs. Though generally effective, the quality of support was inconsistent, with a perception that frequent turnover and varying capability of staff contributed to these problems.

There were also concerns of poor governance and discipline within committees, with reported instances of sustained inappropriate individual behaviours, which were not resolved by either the committee Chair or Standards Australia, and weak enforcement of conflict-of-interest declarations and management.

The composition of standards committees was another frequently raised topic, with issues relating to the current system of stakeholder representatives, including:

- limitations on committee composition imposed by the current system of Nominating Organisations and their representatives;
- under- and over-representation of some stakeholder (commercial / organisational / societal / individual) interests on committees; and
- inconsistent alignment between stakeholders' interests and their nominees' actions.

With committee membership being determined through nomination from a Nominating Organisation, it was felt that committees can end up with a sub-optimal mix or lack of depth of expertise, with talented individuals effectively excluded. There was also a perception that the system can be biased against parts of society and the economy not already 'insiders' in the standards development process, for example consumers or sources of innovation in established sectors. There was an additional concern that some nominees may not be effectively consulting their Nominating Organisations and representing their viewpoints reliably in committee discussions and ballots.

Many other insightful comments were received, with an overview in the table below.

 **Committee composition**

 **Standards initiation**

 **Drafting process**

 **Public consultation, balloting & publication**

 **Participant perspectives**

 **Stakeholder perspectives**

 **Digital Tools & AI**

 **Standards Australia support**

 **International Standards**

 **Other topics**

5. General Observations and Themes

Considering the standards development process as a whole, it is clear that it is an inherently challenging leadership and management task, far more demanding than project management within a single organisation would typically be.

It spans a very heterogenous set of committees and standards, with major differences in scale, task and participant personalities.

These stand in contrast to the essence of Standards Australia's current project management approach which is founded on:

- a focus on administrative support for committees, with relatively light-touch progress management; and
- the aim of a consistent approach across all committees.

The development of standards necessarily relies on the generosity of large numbers of volunteer technical experts for viability, and management of development projects must therefore respond to the inherent complexity of part-time resources with many competing priorities for their time.

Compared to conventional project management (involving dedicated key personnel with established relationships), key aspects of team and inter-personal dynamics such as trust building (limited contact, mostly online), conflict management (among experts whose role is to provide varying opinions), commitment (competing priorities) and accountability (large committees) are far harder to establish. This will inevitably create difficulties of leadership, drive, and control.

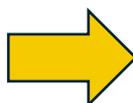
These difficulties can be compounded by several other standards-specific factors:

- a lack of control over committee composition,
- hidden objectives to resolve contentious policy issues through standards development,
- a process flow which often defers resolution of difficult issues until late,
- inadequate digital tools, and
- project management support which can lack perceived authority.

The influence of these factors varies significantly among committees, but Standards Australia's ability to respond effectively to these variations under the current process is relatively limited.

As a result, the current process falls well short of an aspiration to best practice project management and is heavily reliant on the skills of the Chair, Project Manager, and individual committee members for its success. This is summarised on the following page:

Current Standards Australia Process	Best Practice for efficiency & effectiveness
Complex, hidden underlying purpose(s) of a standards development process	Clear purpose and common vision for outcomes
No control over committee composition	Right team – mix of people / skills
Accountability uncertainty between committee and SA	Clear accountability, end to end
Leadership unclear / dispersed (Chair / PM)	Strong, clear leadership
Part-time core content drivers	Motivated central driving force
Limited authority of SA PMs	Sufficient authority and influence
Issues resolved at end of process Relies on Nominating Organisations reps to update stakeholders	Issues identified and fixed early Feedback to test, learn, iterate
Editing late, re-work and repeated changes	Changes caught early, fixed once
Management focus on rate of progress	Manage the causes, not just the symptoms Team dynamic and “health”, not just progress



On the positive side, stakeholder and participant attitudes are overwhelmingly supportive and goodwill is extremely high, with many committees functioning effectively in spite of the complexities listed above. Hence the nature of Standards Australia’s challenge seems to be in better responding to difficulties and organising to minimise them, rather than wholesale changes to the functioning of every committee.

The standards development process has a very high degree of stakeholder participation and engagement, underpinned by the central role of Nominating Organisations. This is very important, given that the objective is not only to produce a technically excellent document but to also produce a community consensus in support of the new standard which will reinforce its validity and impact. Notwithstanding the critical feedback received during consultation, this aspect of the current Nominating Organisation system remains highly beneficial, making it a system to build on and improve, rather than simply replace.

Finally, it will be important for any proposed changes to the standards development process to position it to be ready to take advantage of current developments in digital technology, particularly the rising capabilities of AI. There is no question that this new technology will have a profound impact on standards development over the next few years, just as it will on other knowledge-based, document processing activities. Despite well-publicised concerns and fears over accuracy, the technology already offers a revolutionary capability in text processing and reasoning, and it continues to develop at an exceptional pace.

Many stakeholders and participants expressed openness to, and enthusiasm for, the use of AI, while unanimously insisting on retaining the core role of human expertise in standards setting. There are many obvious applications of AI in standards, in particular for improving the most labour-intensive and time-consuming parts of the process – drafting (ready for expert critique validation) and editing (for consistency and conformity to style etc.). There is also huge potential in researching and summarising existing standards (including international and overseas standards) for an accelerated starting point and to better inform expert critiques. These are all major pain points for the current standards development process, which can be expected to become for less problematic over time through the use of this technology.

Therefore, changes to the current process and toolset should anticipate a future where basic drafting and editing are far easier, cheaper and quicker (essentially “on-demand”), and participants focus on higher-value uses of their time such as debate and decision-making which draws on their deep experience and balances a range of interests. Currently, however, AI tools are still complex and fallible. Their effective use requires expertise and customisation, so they cannot yet simply be given to inexperienced, non-AI-expert users. There’s much to be learned about how to best deploy AI *for standards* use *specifically*, which can only be discovered through experimentation. It will be important for Standards Australia to actively trial use of AI as part of its change program.

A number of the above themes recurred in conversations with similar overseas standards bodies, in particular BSI in the UK and CSA in Canada. Their approaches already show a degree of response to some of these concerns.

BSI (UK)	CSA (Canada)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic prioritisation of sectors • Recently integrated strategic sector teams into core SD organisation • Evolved (like SA) from technical staff to more generalist project managers (publishing experience) • 50% of committees serviced light-touch by central 'Committee Service Centre' (not dedicated PM) • Process still slower than desired (overshooting targets) • Perceived to be still too passive in committee management • 2 forms of fast-track standards (PAS, FLEX) • Annual committee planning process • Invested in formal governance processes (power to remove etc), also in building diversity in committees, and succession planning • Already trialling the use of AI (initially for committee minutes) • Impact of Grenfell Tower experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select their own committee members directly (with the Chair), aim for a balanced matrix of interest groups • Very rigorous selection process for Chairs, fixed terms • Program managers are typically more experienced / senior (equal calibre / "matching stripes"), partner for Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decisions by both in concurrence • PM is in charge of the draft • monitor process, guide Chair • Typically start with 'seed document'; may pay for this to be produced or develop it internally (save times / cost later) • Also explicitly seek input from groups not represented on the committees • Support from Research, Policy and Government Relations teams • Code of conduct strictly enforced with escalation procedure to insulate PMs and committees • Strong digital tools, using AI for search and translation, experimenting with use for editing (as a recommendation) • Strategic industry sectors aligned to government policy priorities, each with a strategi committee of stakeholders

6. Core Recommendations

Properly addressing the stakeholder issues and process weaknesses identified above will require a number of fundamental changes at Standards Australia, reflected in 9 core recommendations below, which address the standards development process overall.

Summary of Core Recommendations



These recommendations should be thought of as describing a future operating model for Standards Australia, one which the organisation can evolve towards, rather than a blueprint for immediate action across the board with all committees.

Recommendation 1

Overall approach: switch from administrative support to active management of the standards development process and its committees

Standards Australia should take end-to-end accountability for the conduct of committees and their outcomes. This will include setting each committee up for success, ensuring the provision of clear committee leadership, actively managing the people and dynamics within the committee (not just its progress), and acting as arbitrator when needed, not just facilitator.

This represents a fundamental change in stance for the organisation, making it a far more active participant in the process and reducing its current degree of insulation from contentious issues. It should therefore be underpinned by courage and a thorough reconsideration of risk tolerance and other related governance parameters by Standards Australia's Board and senior management.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia will work towards strengthening its accountability for the overall effectiveness of the committee processes. This will include more active oversight of committee composition, leadership, behaviour, delivery risks and stakeholder dynamics, with earlier intervention where issues are identified.

This shift will be supported by enhanced capability of Standards Australia staff, clearer internal role definitions, strengthened escalation pathways, improved committee health reporting, and the introduction of service level expectations to reinforce mutual obligations between Standards Australia, committee leadership and participants.

Importantly, this approach will be applied proportionately. Change efforts will be focused where risk, complexity or other issues warrant stronger intervention.

Recommendation 2

Senior committee leadership support: in partnership with committee Chairs

Change the role of Standards Australia's personnel from process administrators and facilitators to genuine partners in the leadership of the committees with the committee Chair.

Combine the current Engagement and Standards Development roles into an "SA Lead" role (*formal title TBD*) with end-to-end accountability from proposal to publication. These individuals are to monitor and manage committee and stakeholder dynamics, requiring strong capabilities beyond project administration – e.g. industry knowledge and a higher-level, strategic view of standards, understanding of team/inter-personal dynamics, negotiation skills, management of conflicts of interest and behavioural standards etc.

Standards Australia should continue to provide PMO support where necessary, ideally by providing a more efficient centralised "committee service centre" function model.

A central governance function should also be established, perhaps by revising the remit of the existing Production Management Group (PMG), to handle dispute resolution at arm's length to the committees; with the ability to continue to refer higher risk matters to SDAC as required.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia supports the strengthening of senior leadership support provided to committees and will evolve its approach accordingly.

This includes targeted capability uplift in order to place greater emphasis on leadership, facilitation, stakeholder engagement, governance oversight and risk management. Enhanced PMO support arrangements will also be provided with the aim of improving consistency and effectiveness.

Clearer governance and escalation pathways will be developed to reinforce appropriate separation between routine process management and higher-level adjudication.

Recommendation 3

Set up committees for success: actively influence the composition of committees to optimise the team for the job

Standards Australia should develop clear principles to inform the composition of standards committees, which ensure all relevant community interests are appropriately represented in discussion and voting. For each committee, the “committee leadership”, i.e. the SA Lead, in consultation with the Chair (unless conflicted), should carefully balance the structure of interests to be represented across it, following these guidelines as closely as possible to achieve their intended effect through the choice of Nominating Organisations.

Similarly, they should carefully consider and clearly specify the essential roles and mix of skills required for the committee’s success and communicate these to the relevant Nominating Organisations to guide their selection of suitable nominees. The mix should explicitly incorporate appropriate diversity and succession planning goals.

Where the nominees provided fail to cover the full skill mix required, the committee leadership should have the ability to appoint additional members who will improve the committee’s overall composition (subject to a reasonable limit to prevent dilution of stakeholder votes). In the rare event that a nominee is considered by the committee leadership to be unsuitable, Standards Australia should have the ability to refer that nomination back to the Nominating Organisation or decline the proposed nomination.

For each committee, the leadership should formalise the following 3 key roles, and make a very careful choice of an individual (typically, but not always, from the committee) to be accountable for each of them:

- Project Owner – overall accountability for delivery and committee functioning (usually the Chair or SA Lead)
- Project Lead – accountability for key content decisions and day-to-day progress
- Primary Writer – accountable for rapid turnaround of detailed amendments

NB – one person might take on more than one role if they have sufficient capacity.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia supports a more proactive approach to committee composition and capability. This includes clearer articulation of the skills, experience and representation that may be required for committees, improved guidance to Nominating Organisations, and more active management of gaps, diversity and succession.

Key committee roles and accountabilities will be agreed and formalised up-front with the aim of improving clarity and supporting effective delivery.

Recommendation 4

Optimise the drafting process for efficiency

Within the inevitable constraints of largely part-time resources, there are 3 areas where Standards Australia could improve drafting efficiency:

- **Invest in high-quality digital tools for drafting and committee processes**

Standards Australia should establish a dedicated taskforce (including user representatives) charged with a transformation project for the suite of digital drafting tools. Its remit should include active exploration and deployment of potential AI tools.

- **Accelerate core drafting**

Turnaround times between committee discussions and updated drafts are a major source of delay and inefficiency, although, this is likely in the medium term to be ameliorated by the advancement of AI drafting tools.

However, in the interim, Standards Australia and committee leadership should place particular focus on how each committee can find and use resources at its disposal to minimise turnaround time and achieve acceleration.

Options include explicitly seeking greater levels of commitment from a small core team at project inception, rotating drafting “turnaround lead(s)” with responsibility to very rapid response, more dedicated drafters (i.e. volunteers or paid writers sponsored by stakeholders, or from Standards Australia’s technical writers), use of technology / AI, etc.

Committee leadership should discuss options with Nominating Organisations to agree the approach and hence completion time expectations.

- **Focus on early resolution of contentious issues**

Using a “heads of agreement” approach, committees should initially develop a summary document of the anticipated key issues, proposed decisions and their rationale, to guide later drafting standard approaches to e.g. legal drafting.

This document should be shared early in the process with Nominating Organisations to obtain direct stakeholder input on potentially contentious issues and pre-agreement to the key terms, providing direct continuity from the proposal phase.

Drafting can continue in parallel while any contentious issues are resolved - well before public comment and balloting

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia acknowledges as a key priority the need to improve drafting efficiency and reduce avoidable delays.

Earlier resolution of key issues, clearer drafting ownership and improved enablement will be prioritised, including the introduction of a “Heads of Agreement” (HoA) for key projects. This HoA will be applied in a manner depending on the nature and complexity of the project.

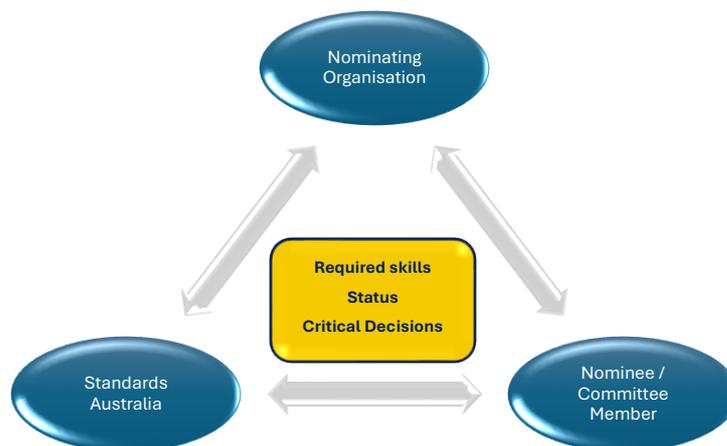
In addition, further investment will be made regarding the progressive modernisation of drafting and collaboration tools, including consideration of the appropriate use of AI.

Recommendation 5

Strengthen and deepen Nominating Organisation partnerships

Build on the strong existing relationships between Standards Australia and its Nominating Organisations to create more active, productive partnerships in standards development.

In addition to collaboration on nominee skills discussed in Recommendation 3, Standards Australia should seek to bring Nominating Organisations into 3-party dialogues (SA : Nominating Organisation: nominee).



This would improve Nominating Organisations' access to information (transparency and visibility of process and progress), facilitate easier and more effective Nominating Organisation - nominee communications, and better engage Nominating Organisations in the review and pre-approval of committees' critical decisions much earlier in the development process (Recommendation 4).

In addition, balloting and approvals should be streamlined, with the responsibility for casting ballots being given formally to the Nominating Organisations, rather than the nominee (i.e. committee member), to highlight the importance of organisational endorsement of committees' work. Nominating Organisations may still elect to delegate their voting to their nominee, but formal accountability at the organisational level will reinforce the mutual obligation between Standards Australia and its Nominating Organisations to contribute to an effective standards development process with an informed enforcement of consensus rules.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia sees stronger engagement with Nominating Organisations as central to the standards system.

Greater emphasis will be placed on early involvement, transparency of progress, clearer organisational accountability in balloting, and more effective three-way engagement between Standards Australia, Nominating Organisations and nominees.

Recommendation 6

Stricter enforcement of committee behaviour standards and conflict of interest management

Standards Australia should strengthen its code of conduct for committee members, with clear examples and supporting guidance provided to aid understanding and interpretation.

Committee leadership should strictly enforce these standards of behaviour and conflict of interest management.

The SA Leads should actively monitor code compliance during the committee process, managing disputes within the committees and, where necessary, through formal grievance processes via referral to a central Standards Australia governance function (for example a revised PMG with escalation to SDAC) with powers to adjudicate, issue sanctions and impose interim measures within committed turnaround times.

Term limits for Chairs should be also implemented and enforced, in line Standards Australia's current guidelines and with reference to best practice rules for company directors.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia agrees that there are opportunities to strengthen the approach to managing the behaviour and conflicts of interest .

Greater guidance and training will be provided to staff, alongside the introduction of a formal framework to proactively address issues with conduct of committee members and (both actual and perceived) conflicts of interests.

Clearer guidance will also be provided to committee members on their obligations to declare interests, and excuse themselves from necessary discussions. In addition, specific additional guidance and support will be provided for Chairs (refer Recommendation 7).

A central SA governance function will be introduced to manage escalation pathways allowing committee members to escalate concerns to be assessed. This function will be able to refer unresolvable objections to SDAC to adjudicate.

While term limits for Chairs already exist, Standards Australia acknowledges the need to strengthen implementation of these limits, along with more proactive Chair succession planning.

Recommendation 7

Stimulate participation and support participants

- **Stronger support for Chairs**

Standards Australia should provide greater leadership support to Chairs through the new SA Lead role, with these individuals able to act in a variety of capacities to complement the strengths of the individual Chair, e.g. as guide, coach, thought partner, governance advisor, stakeholder liaison etc.

In addition, Standards Australia should establish a peer development and support network for committee Chairs, where Chairs can benefit personally and professionally from closer association with experienced senior colleagues. As a first task, the network could develop its own framework for best practice in standards committee leadership “by Chairs, for Chairs”, then work together to raise the quality of leadership in the standards development process through regular ongoing professional development e.g. peer forums, specific skills training (team dynamics, negotiation skills etc.).

- **Expand pool of talented people in the Standards ecosystem**

Actively encourage interest and promote and facilitate participation in the standards development process from individuals with diverse backgrounds.

Establish / expand “communities of interest” around committees, engaging talented and experienced individuals with an interest in standards to become involved and demonstrate their suitability for future committee membership. These communities could be kept abreast of developments in the particular committee, their views canvassed on select topics and perhaps be used for “beta-testing” of proposed standards by a pool of interested experts to refine a draft prior to formal public consultation.

Where Nominating Organisations would appreciate assistance in finding suitable nominees, Standards Australia should maintain a register of suitably qualified candidates as required.

- **Mentoring younger members by retiring members (to pass on valuable expertise)**

Standards Australia should introduce a structured mentoring program where retiring committee members guide new or emerging contributors. This would accelerate knowledge transfer, build practical standards development skills, and create a clear pathway that attracts and nurtures new talent. By pairing experienced members with newcomers for short, focused mentoring cycles, the organisation can preserve critical expertise, strengthen capability, and support a sustainable pipeline of future committee leaders.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia agrees with the recommendation and the benefit of providing greater support for Chairs, who are a critical element to success in standards development.

A Chair peer group will be established to provide an ongoing forum for leadership development, shared learning and reinforcement of expected behavioural and governance standards.

Standards Australia also supports creating Communities of Interest to develop and maintain a curated pool of potential committee participants. This will include pathways to register interest in participating to assist Standards Australia and Nominating Organisations in identifying and engaging appropriate candidates. These communities will also be used to support early and broader participation beyond the existing standards ecosystem.

A committee member mentoring program will also be introduced with the aim of providing practical, early-stage guidance and support for new members.

Recommendation 8

Strategic agenda on competitiveness, innovation and international standards setting

Guidelines on the criteria for adopting international or overseas standards should be strengthened and enforced, to ensure the standards development process is fostering competitiveness and minimising barriers to effective competition within Australia and for Australian companies internationally (in line with the Productivity Commission's and Treasury's recommendations).

Standards Australia should develop and implement a more active strategic agenda, in conjunction with government and key stakeholders, to concentrate its resources on areas of maximum impact, stimulate innovation and competitiveness, and ensure Australia's interests are protected internationally.

There should be an active scanning process for emerging areas where new standards would be beneficial. The Alternative Pathway process should be expanded to focus on strategic priority sectors where speed is critical, with current restrictions on its use relaxed to maximise its potential benefit.

On international standards, Standards Australia should engage the government and stakeholders in a collective high-level dialogue to agree on the optimal strategy for Australia's participation in international standards development and seek appropriate resourcing for effective participation in international bodies with guidance on targeting (e.g. prioritising funding to an agreed list of nationally important topics).

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia recognises the importance of appropriate standards development (particularly the consideration and adoption of international and overseas standards) with regards to productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

Research will be strengthened at the proposal stage in order to provide a briefing document to committee leadership that identifies relevant international and overseas standards, as well as broader industry, productivity and competition trends or issues.

In addition, clearer justification and documentation will be required where deviations from international standards are proposed, or overseas alternatives are not considered appropriate.

Standards Australia will also enhance its strategic research capability to proactively identify priority areas for new or revised standards that are aligned to the National Interest and Strategic Agenda. Such new or revised standards will be given due consideration under the Alternative Pathway. Where not suitable for this process, these standards will be considered for development under the revised standards development process arising from this review, along with any relevant lessons learned from the Alternative Pathway process. Standards Australia also agrees that a nationally coordinated approach to international standards participation is important and will engage with government on the development of a potential strategy, including consideration of funding adequacy and prioritisation.

Recommendation 9

Enforce process governance and accountability

To ensure Standards Australia's process guidelines are applied consistently in practice, clearer and stricter service level agreements (SLAs) should be introduced covering both Standards Australia staff and committee operations responsibilities across the standards development lifecycle. These SLAs should define expected turnaround times, escalation thresholds and decision rights, and be actively monitored by the SA Lead and relevant senior management.

To reinforce accountability, Standards Australia should establish a program of regular, risk-based audits of committee performance and internal process adherence. Audit outcomes should be reported to senior leadership, with clear corrective actions, timeframes and accountability assigned where non-compliance or systemic weaknesses are identified.

Standards Australia response

Standards Australia recognises the need to improve the consistency of quality, responsiveness and overall accountability throughout the standards development process. This will be of even greater importance for the implementation and success of the actions arising from this review.

In consultation with stakeholders, clear SLAs will be developed for critical stages of the process. These will be monitored and reported by the SA Lead and senior management to SDAC.

In addition, a risk-based audit program will be developed to ensure Standards Australia holds itself accountable to the same level of rigour and governance as other accredited Standards Development Organisations (SDOs). Results, along with any required actions for improvement, will be shared with both SDAC and senior leadership.

7. Implementation approach

Implementing change in an environment as complex as the standards development ecosystem is inherently difficult. It requires adaptation by staff, committee participants and stakeholders, with for many a need to acquire new skills and/or change internal processes or work patterns.

Such a change can only be implemented over a period of years, not months. Hence, as indicated above, the core recommendations should be thought of as describing a future operating model for Standards Australia, one which the organisation can evolve towards, rather than a blueprint for immediate action across the board with all committees.

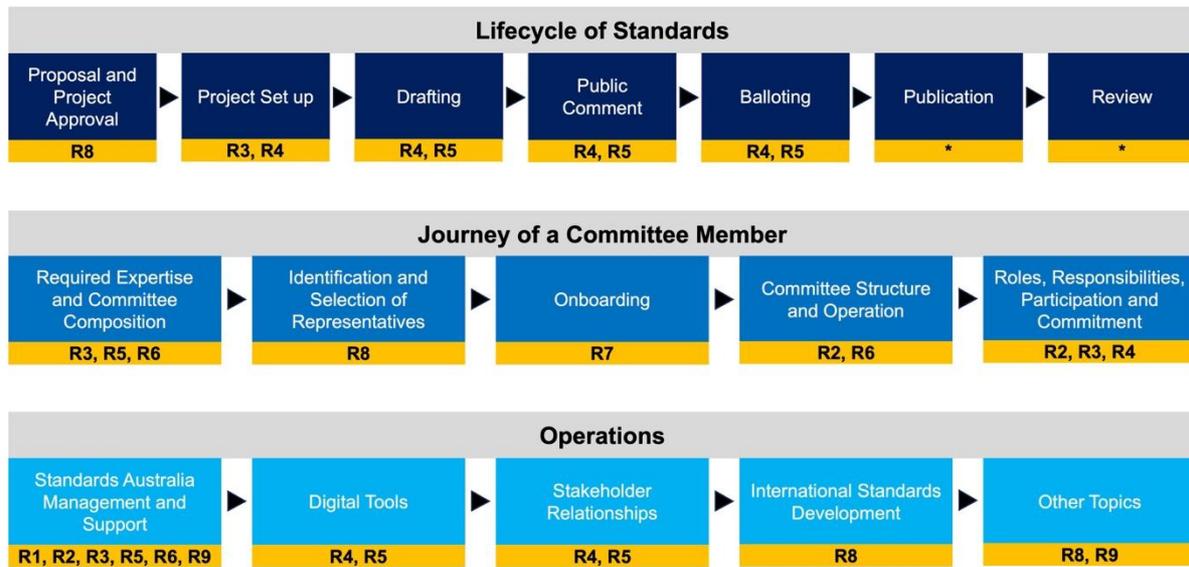
In the many committees which are already operating highly effectively, it would be wise to employ the maxim of “if it’s not broken, don’t fix it”, and concentrate change management efforts in areas where they will have the most positive impact. Hence Standards Australia should implement this overall new approach initially in those committees that are higher risk, higher profile or have higher complexity.

There are, however, some recommendations which can be implemented rapidly across Standards Australia and throughout all committees, for example:

- Specifying the skills required for new committee members, and communicating this to guide Nominating Organisations’ nominations
- Establishing the digital tools taskforce, with regular status communication to all stakeholders and participants
- Developing key issue “heads of agreements” to specify and agree on the key decisions early in the process, with feedback and pre-approval sought from Nominating Organisations
- Bolstering committee governance through stricter enforcement of behaviour standards, conflicts management, and enforcement of term limits on Chairs
- Implementing peer development forums for Chairs, instigating development of draft best practice leadership guidelines “by Chairs for Chairs”
- Developing and enforcing clearer guidelines on the adoption of international and overseas standards, combined with streamlining the new standards proposals process to minimise administrative burden
- Trialing use of AI for drafting text on a revision to a standard, and for editing. Investigating collaboration on AI with overseas standards agencies.

Notwithstanding the gradual nature of the implementation, visible progress on a number of important fronts will be important, to counteract a perception among some stakeholders that Standards Australia has been relatively unresponsive and slow to change historically. Further stakeholder consultation early in the implementation process will be an important and necessary step.

In addition, the 9 major recommendations can be mapped along the overall Standards Development Process as noted below:



8. Concluding comments

This review has provided a clear and compelling blueprint for strengthening Standards Australia’s standards development system, so it remains robust, trusted and fit for purpose in a rapidly evolving environment.

Notwithstanding the positive feedback and support for standards development received throughout the consultation process, the recommendations outlined throughout this report highlight the need for more active leadership, stronger governance, improved digital capability, clearer accountability, and a more strategic and inclusive approach to committee composition and stakeholder engagement.

While the changes required are significant, they form a coherent pathway toward a more effective, efficient and future ready operating model.

Crucially, Standards Australia has demonstrated a high degree of proactiveness and genuine willingness to embrace these changes. The organisation’s commitment to modernising its approach, openness to stakeholder feedback, and alignment with its broader strategic agenda, reflected in its early endorsement of the recommendations, positions it strongly for successful implementation. By taking deliberate, staged steps to evolve its processes, invest in capability, and strengthen its partnerships, Standards Australia has the opportunity to set itself up for long-term success.

With strong leadership, careful prioritisation, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders, the organisation is well placed to deliver a standards development system that accelerates innovation, supports national competitiveness, upholds the national interest, and continues to reflect the expert contributions and consensus that underpin its enduring value.

This report has been prepared by Gareth Dando, of Exigent Advisory for Standards Australia. The report and the information contained within may not be shared or reproduced without the explicit permission of Standards Australia.