Standards Australia

STANDARDISATION GUIDE 007:

ADOPTION OF INTERNATIONAL OR OVERSEAS STANDARDS

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the policy of Standards Australia (SA) on the adoption of International or Overseas Standards as Australian Standards (including joint Australian/New Zealand Standards) and is intended to assist committees in their consideration of the international and overseas alignment of Standards under development. Guidance for committees on related process issues is given in Appendix A.

The body charged with the responsibility for setting this policy is the Standards Australia Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC).

For any given Standard, the decision on whether to adopt an International or Overseas Standard normally rests with the appropriate Standards Technical Committee (TC).

2 POLICY

The policy of Standards Australia is to base Australian Standards on International or Overseas Standards to the maximum extent feasible and to apply the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (known as the WTO TBT Agreement) as a benchmark.

Notwithstanding the fact that the WTO TBT Agreement is addressed to national governments and is only binding for technical regulations for tradable goods, the policy extends to ensuring that all Australian Standards meet the provisions of Articles 2.2 and 2.4 of the WTO TBT Agreement, 1994. The immediate consequence is that Australian Standards should be adoptions of International or Overseas Standards, unless there are good reasons for the contrary.

This compliance would also ensure that obligations of Australia under the WTO TBT Agreement would be met if any such Standard were adopted by a government agency as a technical regulation (see Implications of WTO).

In addition, Standards Australia is committed to complying with Annex 3 of the WTO TBT Agreement, the Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards, which is applicable to non-government standardising bodies such as Standards Australia.

NOTES

1. *Article 2 and Annex 3 of the World Trade Organisation Technical Barriers to Trade (WTOTBT) Agreement.*
2. *The ISO/IEC Guide 59, ISO and IEC recommended practices for standardization by national bodies, is also acknowledged as a useful reference document.*

3 BENEFITS OF THE ADOPTION OF INTERNATIONAL OR OVERSEAS STANDARDS

The principal benefit to Australia of basing Australian Standards on the equivalent International or Overseas Standards is the benefit to the Australian economy by facilitating the international exchange of goods and services. Other benefits include:

- International (IEC and ISO) Standards generally reflect the best experience of industry and regulators worldwide and cover conditions in a variety of countries;
- Australia's obligations under the WTO TBT Agreement are supported; and
- Participation in international certification schemes is facilitated.

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4 IMPLICATIONS OF WTO

GATT is the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which Australia first signed in early 1992. The GATT developed TBT Agreement is now administered by the WTO. In relation to Standards, the GATT, now the WTO TBT Agreement, obliges signatory countries not to raise non-tariff (i.e., technical) barriers to trade.

The mechanism by which this section of the WTO TBT Agreement operates is that any mandatory Standard issued by a signatory nation that might have an impact on trade must be reported to the other WTO signatories via a network of national notification points. The other nations then have a period during which they may lodge a challenge to the implementation of the Standard on the grounds that it represents a non-tariff barrier to trade. Alignment of the national Standard in question with the equivalent International or Overseas Standard is recognised as a full and adequate discharge of a nation's obligations under this section of the WTO TBT Agreement.

In Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is the WTO Notification Point. Under Articles 2.2 and 2.4 of the WTO TBT Agreement, mandatory national Standards shall not be more trade restrictive than necessary to fulfil a legitimate objective, taking into account the risks non-fulfilment would create. Such legitimate objectives include:

(a) National security requirements;

(b) Prevention of deceptive practices;

(c) Protection of human health or safety, animal or plant life or health, or the environment; and

(d) Fundamental climatic or other geographical factors.

NOTE Reciprocal rights of appeal under the WTO Code are available to Australian manufacturers supplying overseas markets.

Standards Australia has notified the WTO of its voluntary adherence to the WTO TBT Agreement of Good Practice for Preparation, Adoption and Certification of Standards. While the WTO TBT Agreement does not place a strict, immediate obligation on non-government standardisation bodies, such as Standards Australia, to alter Standards to align with International or Overseas Standards, the policy of Standards Australia is to follow Articles 2.2 and 2.4 of the WTO TBT Agreement, particularly where the Standard under development may be called up by a regulatory body. A similar obligation is imposed upon accredited Standards Development Organisations (SDOs) by the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC).

5 INTERNATIONAL AND OVERSEAS STANDARDS

5.1 International Standards

The International Standards which are covered by this policy are normally understood to include:

(a) ISO Standards, published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO);

(b) IEC Standards, published by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC);

(c) Standards published by other international bodies having similar standing to that of ISO/IEC, e.g., CIE, IWTO, ITU; and

(d) A national or regional Standard which, in the absence of an International Standard, is so widely used internationally that it is generally recognised as being the de-facto International Standard. Certain European regional Standards produced by CEN and CENELEC have achieved the status of de-facto International Standards. Similarly, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler Code has gained this level of acceptance in many parts of the World, and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Standards.

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There is occasionally confusion about the difference between an 'International Standard' and an overseas national Standard. Except as set out in Item (d) above, the national or industry Standards of other countries are not considered to be 'International Standards' for the purposes of this Guide. See Overseas Standards.

NOTE Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand both have agreements with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN); however, these agreements are not identical, and they can adopt and modify CEN documents and text. If a CEN document is used for a joint AS/NZS Standard, New Zealand only has permission to reproduce the original text; modifications must be approved by the CEN.

5.2 Overseas Standards

The Overseas Standards which are covered by this policy are normally understood to include those developed and approved by a specific region, country or organisation. Overseas Standards do not include those listed in Item (d) under International Standards.

6 CORRESPONDENCE AND LOCAL VARIATIONS

When comparing Australian Standards with relevant International or Overseas Standards, ISO/IEC Guide 21 1 defines three degrees of correspondence, identical (IDT), modified (MOD) and not equivalent (NEQ) – see Appendix B for more details. When assessing which level of correspondence might apply, the key consideration is whether or not a product designed to comply with the International or Overseas Standard would automatically meet the equivalent Australian Standard, and vice versa. If this is the case, the Australian Standard is normally referred to as being 'identical' to the International or Overseas Standard.

Even though the objective is to exactly align Australian Standards with the corresponding International or Overseas Standards, there will be Standards in which local changes have to be incorporated. As described above, there are several legitimate reasons for varying the technical requirements of an International or Overseas Standard as set out in Articles 2.2 and 2.4 of the WTO TBT Agreement; but these reasons, such as the one related to human health and safety in Article 2.2, should not be interpreted too broadly.

Only where a comprehensive assessment of the International or Oversea Standard reveals a demonstrable and unacceptable level of risk to human health and safety if the Standard is followed would this Article apply and, even then, the extent of the permissible variation is limited to that required to bring the level of risk down to an acceptable level. This point needs to be considered when developing Standards.

When variations to an International or Overseas Standard have been included in the Australian adoption, it is essential that all technical variations are clearly identified and explained in the Australian Standard, based on the criteria in the WTO TBT Agreement (see Appendix A.3).

NOTE For general rules regarding the drafting of Australian Standards, refer to SG 006 Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards.

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APPENDIX A PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION OF INTERNATIONAL OR OVERSEAS STANDARDS

A.1 General Outline of the Process

Consideration of the adoption of an International or Overseas Standard should be an integrated part of the Standards development process, along with the other considerations, such as costs and benefits, described in SG 001 Preparing Standards. The following guidelines may assist committees to achieve a smooth integration:

(a) Before any Standards project is approved, a search must be undertaken by the proponent as part of the Project Proposal submission process and by Standards Australia when assessing the proposal to identify equivalent Overseas or International Standards. The Committee should review the results of the search when it first considers the new project and make an informed decision on how best to proceed.

(b) Committees should take an active role in developing International or Overseas Standards corresponding to their own national interests. It is frequently possible to significantly influence the content of an International or Overseas Standard so as to make it more suitable for use in Australia.

(c) Any International or Overseas Standard used as the basis for an Australian Standard should be one that is used in practice in other countries. To assess this, committees may need to gain some information on support for the International or Overseas Standard in practice.

(d) Wider promotion for participation in the development of International or Overseas Standards to ensure they are sufficiently flexible to provide for the varying circumstances of use prevailing in all countries concerned. To a large extent, the signing of the WTO TBT Agreement and other regional trade agreements will drive motivation for participation.

(e) Standards Australia recommends local adoption wherever possible; the advantages of this are outlined in Appendix C. If an International or Overseas Standard is identified that fully satisfies local requirements, an assessment needs to be undertaken to determine the value of having a local adoption rather than allowing the International or Overseas Standard to be used directly in the marketplace.

(f) The decision to adopt an International or Overseas Standard should be based upon the principles described in this Guide and the timing of any changes to existing national Standards in order to align with International or Overseas Standards that should be acceptable to all stakeholders.

(g) When variations to an International or Overseas Standard have been included in the corresponding Australian Standard, it is essential that all technical variations are clearly identified and explained in the Australian Standard, based on the criteria in the WTO TBT Agreement (see Appendix A.3).

A.2 International or Overseas Adoption

Standards Australia has several pathways to enable the adoption of International or Overseas Standards to keep pace with developments in international and overseas standardisation. These pathways include:

1. Traditional: This requires the formal submission of a proposal to Standards Australia for consideration and evaluation of the identical adoption. A proposal should be submitted through the Project Proposal Portal on the SA website, refer to Submitting a Proposal | Standards Australia.

   A Public Comment (PC) period of 4-weeks is commenced, and the relevant TC ballots on the publication of the international or overseas adoption.

2. Alternative path to the development of an Australian Standard (including international or overseas adoptions): This pathway uses SA as the proponent with support from stakeholders who can justify the research and the need for the work. The proposal is approved by the SDAC and where

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successful, a Project Committee comprised of a group of experts is formed and invited to review the content development.

NOTE Consideration is to be given to small business and end user consumer interests.

A Public Comment (PC) period of 60 days is commenced at the end of drafting. The PC is targeted towards experts in the area. All comments are resolved by SA with input from the Project Committee. Where no segments of industry or stakeholders object to the development of the Standard and consensus is reached, the Standard will be recommended for approval for publication by the SDAC.

A.3 Opt-in Adoption of International Standards as Australian Standards:

Where a constituted Technical Committee is an active Participating Member of an ISO, IEC or ISO/IEC JTC committee and has an approved International Participation Case (IPC), the TC may opt-in to a program for the automatic adoption of International Standards unless objections are received by TC members.

In this program, the Net Benefit is ensured through the International Participation Case (IPC).

Provided that concurrent consultation is undertaken in Australia through the Draft International Standards (DIS) (Parallel Adoption) development process and the TC votes positively on the DIS, consensus for the adoption of the International Standard is implied via the opt-in terms and conditions.

In the event the TC opt-in for participation and is unable to issue a parallel adoption process, at the time of publication of the International Standard, a Public Comment period of 4-weeks is commenced and if no comments are received, consensus for the publication of the adoption of the International Standard is implied via the opt-in terms and conditions.

At any point, TC members can object to the adoption of the international standard (opt out), which would halt the adoption process until such time there is agreement to proceed.

If a TC operates in an area of contention, or where national variations for Australian conditions are often required, this pathway may not be suitable for them.

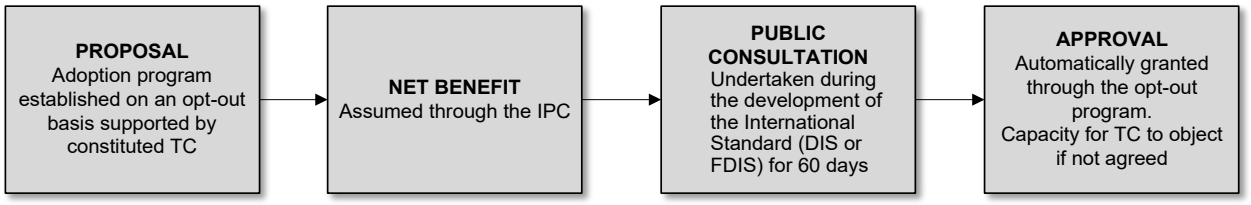


Figure 1 Process flow for alternative pathway to the adoptions of International Standards as Australian Standards

Table 1 Pathway descriptions

Pathway	Description
Traditional	This is the most common pathway. It follows the Standards Development phases from project proposal through to publication of the standard. Committee Members actively participate in this pathway to develop Standards.

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Pathway	Description
Alternative path to the development of an Australian Standard (including international or overseas adoptions)	Standards Australia as the proponent with support from stakeholders. The SDAC approves proposal. A 60-day PC period is undertaken and where there is no objection from industry or stakeholders and consensus is met, the SDAC will recommend publishing.
Opt-in adoption of International Standards as Australian Standards	Where a constituted Technical Committee is an active Participating Member of an ISO, IEC or ISO/IEC JTC committee and has an approved International Participation Case (IPC), the TC may opt-in to a program for the automatic adoption of International Standards unless objections are received by TC members.

A.3 Presentation

The method of presenting International or Overseas Standards as Australian Standards is to electronically reproduce the International or Overseas Standard as a PDF file and add a Preface which sets out the international or overseas origin of the document and whether there are local variations, and the reasons for these variations. The variations shall be presented in a National Variation Box (NVB) underneath the source text. Additional normative or informative material may also be added as national appendices. This method is known as "adoption". Variations shall not be applied to the text of the source document, such as the use of strikeout, highlighted inserted variations or marginal bars.

The levels of correspondence, identical (IDT) and modified (MOD), described in Appendix B are possible when adopting International or Overseas Standards. The most important point to note is that the level of correspondence to the International or Overseas Standard must be immediately apparent to the reader; and for identical or modified adoptions, any local variations clearly indicated.

NOTE For general rules regarding the drafting of Australian Standards, refer to SG 006 Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards.

A.4 Designation

For guidance regarding the numbering (designation) of Australian Standards that are adoptions of International or Overseas Standards, refer to *SG 006 Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards*.

A.5 Maintenance of adopted Standards

Once an Australian Standard has been aligned with its international or overseas counterpart, it is important to ensure that amendments to, and revisions of, the International or Overseas Standard are mirrored in the local Standard so that international equivalence is maintained. Similarly, the effect on international equivalence needs to be considered before any local amendment to an adopted Standard is made.

APPENDIX B DEFINITIONS USED BY INTERNATIONAL OR OVERSEAS STANDARDS BODIES

When describing the degree of correspondence between an Australian and an International or Overseas Standard, the Australian Standard shall be described as either being identical (IDT), modified (MOD) or not equivalent (NEQ), in relation to the International or Overseas Standard. These terms shall be used, which are based on those of ISO/IEC Guide 21 1.

For definitions of identical, modified and not equivalent, refer to *SG 006 Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards*.

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APPENDIX C THE ADVANTAGES OF ADOPTING INTERNATIONAL OR OVERSEAS STANDARDS

It is Standards Australia's recommendation that International or Overseas Standards be adopted nationally rather than simply relying on the use of the International or Overseas Standard.

C.1 Value of Adoption

Although International and Overseas Standard would otherwise still be available to the Standards-using public, even if these Standards are not adopted. The following points were taken into account when formulating this recommendation and are worthy of consideration by committees when considering this value proposition:

- The national adoption of International or Overseas Standards clearly indicates to the Standards-using community that the International or Overseas Standard has been reviewed and endorsed by a Standards Australia committee and found to be relevant to the economic efficiency or safety of the Australian community.
- It clearly indicates that the Standards Australia committee has determined that the International or Overseas Standard is used internationally by Australia's trading partners and is not endorsing obsolete or little used technologies or practices.
- It enables, where appropriate, the selection of options for local usage that are provided for in some International or Overseas Standards.
- It expands the portfolio of Australian Standards coverage and thus encourages those seeking standardisation information to seek it from within Australian Standards.
- It provides the Australian Standards-using community with the adopted International or Overseas Standard at a price that is often less than the International or Overseas Standard and therefore encourages more use of Standards for the benefit of trade and the Australian community.

In summary, where there is a demonstrated need for a reasonably active use of an International or Overseas Standard in Australia, it should be adopted as an Australian Standard.

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REFERENCES

Australian Government Productivity Commission, National Competition Policy analysis 2025

ISO/IEC Guide 21 1, Regional or national adoption of International Standards and other International Deliverables–Adoption of International Standards, first edition, 2005

ISO/IEC. Guide 59, ISO and IEC recommended practices for standardization by national bodies, second edition, 2019

DOCUMENT HISTORY

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13/03/08		v1.0 – First issue
03/07/08		v1.1 – Minor amendments and re-issued
26/05/10	P&P Officer	v1.2 – Hyperlinks updated and re-issued
22/02/12	P&P Officer	v1.3 – Update all hyperlinks after new corporate website released and transfer text into current template.
16/01/13	P&P Coordinator	v1.4 – Reconfirmed/updated Document History and re-issued.
02/04/14	P&P Coordinator	v1.4 – Reissued with "Under Review" watermark.
12/08/14	P&P Coordinator	v1.5 – Reissued with minor amendments to reflect current practice. Appendix A2 is still under review at time of release.
27/01/16	P&P Coordinator	v1.6 - Updated SDC references to SDAC and updated ABSDO references.
	P&P Coordinator	v1.7 - Removed introduction of section 7 Normative References.
16/06/23	Policy Manager: Changes for SDAC	v2.0 - Updates throughout the Guide from over years and added alternate standards development models.
27/06/23	Policy Manager	V2.0.1 - Fixed links and upload of new version.
04/11/2026	Policy Team	V3.0 – Inclusion of Overseas Standards (as opposed to International Standards) as a result of the Aust Govt Productivity Committee's National Competition Policy analysis report 2025.

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