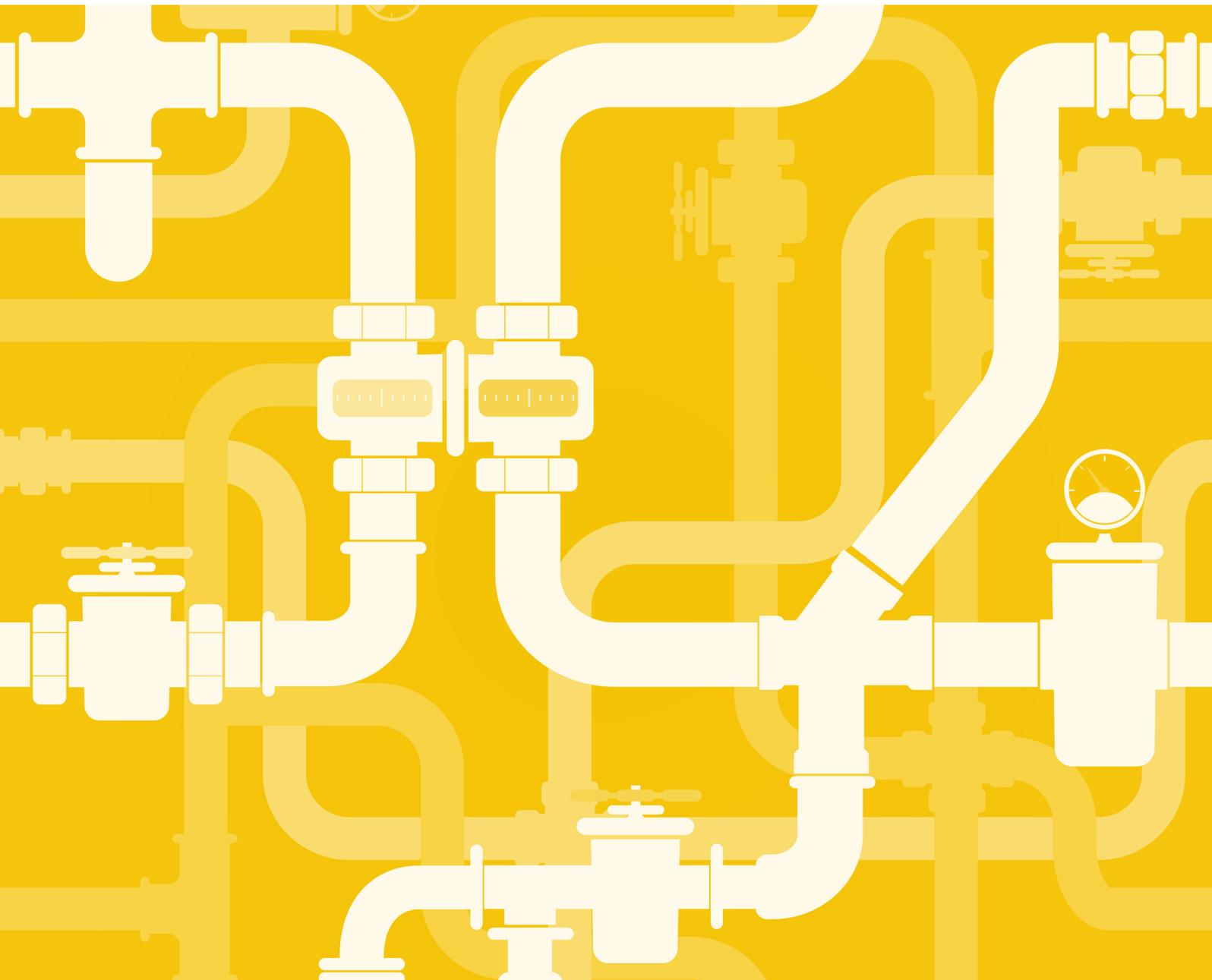


The logo for STANDARDS Australia features a stylized graphic of overlapping circles in shades of yellow and orange, with a grey shadow effect. The text "STANDARDS" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, and "Australia" is in a smaller, lighter grey, sans-serif font below it.

**STANDARDS**  
Australia

# Plumbing Sector Review Consultation Paper



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# Plumbing Review Survey

Plumbing is a significant industry for Standards Australia (SA). Technical standards are critical to the operation of the plumbing sector in Australia. SA has a long history of development work in this area and has a significant proportion of SA resources continually dedicated to the development of standards in the sector.

To ensure that the development work in the plumbing sector is undertaken efficiently and focused on achievable outcomes, SA undertook a survey of its plumbing standards development processes seeking input from stakeholders on:

- What's working
- What's not working
- How we can improve

## What did the respondents say?

We received strong responses from across the sector. Common themes included stakeholder engagement, alignment to Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) processes and the connection to the WaterMark scheme.

***“The ABCB seems to have a power of veto over Standards development”***

***“The relationship between Standards Australia and the ABCB has to be improved to facilitate acceptance”***

***“Many projects require technical input and it appears there are some committees that lack the relevant technical experts and are made up of members with some form of vested interest”***

## **We talked to people to initiate ideas**

SA asked stakeholders about the effectiveness and efficiency of the current system as it relates to strategy and leadership within the sector. The efficiency of the current technical committee arrangements, committee governance, project management and work programs, processes and decision making, the integration of SA and ABCB activities were highlighted as areas of importance.

# **Our Ideas**

## **Strategic Approach**

To ensure continuity of existing work a phased approach is suggested. The first phase is to implement some straightforward, but significant, changes and practices. This will ensure confidence in our processes, advance the plumbing standards development program and align projects for National Construction Code (NCC) consideration.

The second phase will be to look at the more complex challenges:

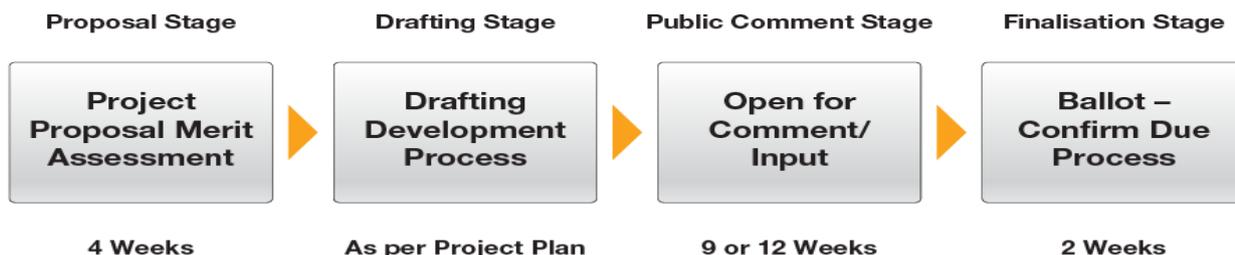
- (a) AS/NZS 3500 document structure and format limitations
- (b) The entire technical committee arrangement
- (c) Document development capabilities

Actions proposed for immediate implementation are discussed further in this paper.

## **1. Alignment**

### **SA & ABCB Development Stages and Timeframes**

A new single streamlined process for the development of Australian Standards referenced in the NCC (generally the AS/NZS 3500 series, and SA WaterMark Documents) is proposed as per below:



This will mean that there is one entry point for the development of all documents and clear milestones that need to be achieved. The process includes indicative timeframes and provides a designated opportunity for comment and input.

As part of the NCC referenced document process, the ABCB would consider the proposal to update a NCC referenced document (e.g. Australian Standard), and if endorsed, agree on the project scope and provide evidence of support. This will allow the projects to have upfront endorsement on the project intent, enable NCC reference consideration and prevent scoping issues being raised later on in the project schedule.

Essentially upfront agreement on a clear scope of work by all relevant stakeholders, including the ABCB, will remove any perceived veto over standards development.

## 2. Discipline in Process

### Project Proposal Process

As part of the project proposal process, proponents will need to articulate the intended impacts of their proposal and specify any relevant design and installation standards:



A robust discipline is required to ensure that better-quality project proposals, with a clearly defined scope, demonstrated need for work and upfront support is obtained

before commencing any standards development work. A simplified project proposal acceptance process is described in **Attachment A**.

The SA National Sector Manager will be available to assist proponents in the development of project proposals and provide preliminary assessments to give an initial indication of acceptance. Importantly, by ensuring projects are appropriately scoped this will allow for technical development to progress.

## **Committee Membership and Governance**

### **Main Committee**

The main committee that is responsible for AS/NZS 3500 series would be responsible for the strategic plumbing program and the governance of the work to support project timelines. Interests would be focused on the broader plumbing sector and national views:

- Benefit to Australia
- Health, safety and welfare of users
- The community
- The environment
- Industry best practice
- New and emerging technologies
- Fitness for purpose



The main committee would provide its sub-committees with clear scope and direction by means of a SA project brief.

SA is to apply the rules and responsibilities for main committee and sub-committees, and clear expectations of process, progress, timeframes and outcomes.

A re-constituted main committee would be required to represent all the relevant key areas in plumbing and would include nominated representatives of organisations as per current SA process. Accordingly, nominating organisations would be invited by SA to nominate a representative for their expertise to represent the views of large groups of interested and affected parties with a common interest.

The following are considered to encompass all the relevant interest groups, who can set strategic programs and govern project work and timelines for the plumbing industry:

- Independent Chairperson
- Standards Australia (Project Manager)
- ABCB\*
- *End users/consumers:* Consumers' Federation of Australia
- *Installers:* Master Plumbers
- *Building owners:* Property Council of Australia
- *Designers:* Association of Hydraulic Services Consultants Australia
- *Product suppliers/manufacturers:*
  - Australian Industry Group
  - Australian Stainless Steel Development Association
  - Copper Development Association
  - Plastics Industry Pipe Association of Australia
  - Plumbing Products Industry Group
- *New Zealand:*
  - Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
  - Master Plumbers, Gasfitters & Drainlayers NZ

\*Note: the ABCB represents the collective interest of the eight State & Territory Governments and the Commonwealth in plumbing regulations.

## **Sub-Committees**

Sub-committees would be updated and formed to undertake major sections of work associated with the development of the AS/NZS 3500 series and other documents. The sub-committees would be responsible to the main committee for the scope and timeliness of their work.

The sub-committees would only provide technical input and direction in the standards development work and be accountable for robust adherence to process.

The sub-committees may be updated prior to the commencement of a project to ensure the required and relevant technical skill-sets are included on the committees. Sub-committee membership would be selected by SA and the main committee for their technical expertise in specific areas to undertake an agreed scope of work.

SA welcomes all with specific relevant technical expertise in the plumbing sector to express an interest in participating on sub-committees. A specific skill-set would need to be offered, and the request for participation will be considered by SA and the main committee as part of the planning stage for forthcoming projects.

All stakeholders can participate in the development of documents through a membership body (see suggested main committee model) and during the public comment stage. This stage provides an opportunity for the wider community to review the direction of a draft and provide relevant technical input and feedback, which the sub-committee is obliged to consider in detail and make any necessary updates to the document.

## **Committee Governance**

The role of the committees is set out in Standards Australia Standardisation Guide SG-002 *Structure and Operation of Standardisation Committees*. The SG-004 *Roles and Responsibilities in Standardisation* sets out the roles of others in the development process including Standards Australia staff, nominating organisations and the standards development governance roles.

### 3. Robust Engagement and Priority Setting

A strategic meeting of the main committee would be hosted by SA to consider approved project proposals, align individual project proposal matters and implement an ongoing project strategy.

Project proposals involving the AS/NZS 3500 series that meet the criteria for SA projects will be collated into one register of scoping items. It is then proposed that the main committee meets to decide the priority order in which to complete the work for each part of AS/NZS 3500. These priorities are to be agreed upon and then transferred into the standing revision projects that are to align with the NCC three year amendment cycle.

In addition, to the standing revision projects, approved ad-hoc project proposals which have merit for fast tracking purposes can also be considered by the main committee in addition to the standing revisions.

## We want your feedback on our ideas

We would welcome your comments on our ideas to be sent to [Daniel.Chidgey@Standards.org.au](mailto:Daniel.Chidgey@Standards.org.au) by **1 June 2016**

All comments will be considered in detail and, if necessary, further changes will be undertaken to accommodate responses to the comments.

If you have any questions please contact:

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Email: [Daniel.Chidgey@Standards.org.au](mailto:Daniel.Chidgey@Standards.org.au)

Through our Stakeholder Engagement and Public Affairs team and our executive leadership group, SA will continue to maintain a dialogue with the plumbing sector.

# ATTACHMENT - A

