



Australia's independent, not-for-profit, developer of Australian Standards

TECHNICAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW — RESPONSE TO FINAL REPORT

April 2018



Background

Each year, Standards Australia hosts open forums with nominating organisations and stakeholders as part of a continuous improvement program. A very consistent theme across the forums in 2016 related to an opportunity to modernise technical governance. Whilst there was no single ‘technical governance’ issue coming from these forums and other discussions, there were a number of themes including:

- committee membership and performance;
- ensuring that people with relevant expertise can contribute;
- the role of young leaders and the next generation of contributors;
- “balance of representation” and what this means in different sectors;
- access to documents and drafts through the development cycle;
- access to information at a nominating organisation level; and
- the process for proposing new work and other standards development processes.

At its November 2016 meeting, Standards Australia’s Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC) endorsed and recommended a review of Standards Australia’s technical governance in alignment with Standards Australia’s Strategic Plan. The review was subsequently approved by Standards Australia’s Board of Directors.



cameron. ralph. khoury

Standards Australia commissioned independent consultants cameron. ralph. khoury to conduct the review. Broad consultation was undertaken with stakeholders including Standards Australia staff, members and councillors, nominating organisations,

committee members and other relevant stakeholders with an interest in our work.

An Issues Paper was released for consultation. Targeted and open consultations were conducted directly by cameron. ralph. khoury.

Consultation

Standards Australia values the contributions of stakeholders as an important pillar of success for our organisation.

It was identified early in the process that broad consultation and involvement from stakeholders in any review process was critical to allow an understanding of how best Standards Australia can serve its role, ensure the right levels of participation and continue to deliver high quality outputs that serve Australia today, with a focus on tomorrow.

We were pleased that through the course of the process, 66 written submissions were received, with non-confidential submissions published on our website. In addition, 20 individual or small group interviews were undertaken and staff workshops were held.

Given the broad range of issues raised, cameron. ralph. khoury released an initial Summary Report in December 2017 that reported on major themes and identified the primary focus areas. Stakeholders were again invited to provide comments. We thank those who took that second opportunity to contribute.

In February 2018, cameron. ralph. khoury presented their findings and proposed directions to Standards Australia’s Board and management.

Overarching Response to Findings

Standards Australia's Board and management acknowledge the significant task undertaken by Cameron Ralph Khoury in completing the Technical Governance Review. It is appreciated that the very nature of our organisation, and the varied stakeholders we engage with bring a wide spectrum of viewpoints, including those who are on extreme opposites of a spectrum. Standards Australia commends the review team of Phil Khoury and Debra Russell for their willingness and aptitude to understand and synthesize key themes, and to make the task appear far simpler than it is.

Standards Australia appreciates the genuine recognition from contributors that significant improvements have been made across important areas of operations in the last few years. Equally, Standards Australia acknowledges and embraces the fact that there are many other areas that need review, to ensure that we are able to continue to deliver on community expectations.

Standards Australia's Board and management are committed to delivering quality and beneficial outcomes through the implementation phase of this work to create an even stronger organisation.

Approach

The Cameron Ralph Khoury Report proposes a number of areas for review. The report acknowledges that whilst in some areas, fundamental changes are needed to maintain a contemporary system of technical governance, careful implementation and a non-radical approach to change should lead to greater success.

With this in mind, Standards Australia proposes a number of achievable outcomes with significant potential impact. Additional potential pilots will be explored to test the suitability of ideas that move further from the status quo. Many of these proposals will need careful planning, funding and time before they can be fully implemented.

Standards Australia will also need to consider a cost/benefit and impact analysis in determining which of the proposals the organisation will seek to implement and in which order. This is because it will only be through trialling, testing and phasing that the right balance in a number of areas will be achievable.

Standards Australia notes that the Technical Governance Review and this response paper does not differentiate the development of Australian Standards or joint Australian/New Zealand Standards. This is because the development processes, when undertaken by Standards Australia, are subject to the same processes and criteria. Standards Australia has briefed Standards New Zealand on our Technical Governance Review and will maintain a dialogue through the implementation phase.

Standards Australia Response for Consultation

This Response Paper has been developed by Standards Australia for consultation with stakeholders and it is in no way a final document.

Feedback and input will be sought from stakeholders to refine ideas and suggestions, including priority areas that Standards Australia should focus on.

It is important to note that at this stage no dates for implementation nor prioritisation of initiatives are being discussed, but rather broad areas of suggested focus are being explored. It is anticipated that implementation will commence in July 2018, following the next phase of consultation.

It should also be noted that not all proposed directions from the cameron. ralph. khoury report have a matching proposed initiative. This means that the proposed direction has not been considered by Standards Australia at this stage, but could form part of a Stage 2 of the Implementation Plan.

This response largely follows the structure of the cameron. ralph. khoury report.

cameron. ralph. khoury proposed a 3 tiered reform approach – A, B, C (figure 1) for each of the 6 high level stages (figure 2) in the standards development process. The Standards Australia response that follows sets out our proposal against each of these 6 stages plus international standards, noting which of the reform directions corresponds to these actions.

Figure 1 — 3-Tiered Reform Approach

<p>A. More strategic approach</p> <p>Strategic priorities – For standards as a whole and by sector (or other segment)</p> <p>Strengthen public interest – Embed and articulate publicly, strengthen technical governance</p> <p>Articulate community benefits – Economic estimates of benefits of standards and publishing</p>	<p>C. More proactive quality assurance</p> <p>Multiple paths / processes – Optional ‘best-fit’ pathways for development, comment, approval</p> <p>Strengthen quality of input – Skills/ experience definition for committees, professional writers and chairs</p> <p>Monitoring and controls – Strengthen monitoring, project management, performance monitoring</p> <p>Problem solving / mediation – Protocols for technical disagreements, escalation of problems, complaints</p> <p>Approval process – Transparent, rigorous appeals mechanism, conflict management for processes</p>
<p>B. More open processes</p> <p>Inclusion – Broaden range of participants, greater public access and input</p> <p>Transparency – Better visibility and explanation of processes and decisions</p> <p>Accessibility – Improve ability to comment, request changes, complain, raise issues</p>	

Figure 2 — Standards Development: 6-Stage Process

1. Prioritisation	4. Public comment
2. Committee composition	5. Voting approval
3. Development and drafting	6. Maintenance

1. Prioritisation

A. More strategic approach

To balance top down strategic engagement in sectors and agendas with the need for a bottom up maintenance and development regime, it is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. Standards Australia's CEO to convene Leaders' Forums to inform strategic priorities in each sector, for both national and international standards.
2. Similar CEO Leaders' Forums to also be held to address horizontal priorities in new and emerging areas of work and where development activities may reach across sectors.
3. A Strategic Priorities Document to be published annually following a period of broad community consultation.
4. Integrated economic modelling of the value of standards for a sector or strategic area of focus to be conducted on a phased basis.
5. An increased focus to be given to communicating the benefits of standards to the broad community, to help build a general community understanding of the value of Standards Australia's work.

B. More open process

It is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. A publicly available bulletin board to be developed with information on Standards, Proposals and current Projects. Capacity for stakeholders to "follow" a Standard and be notified of any new proposals or changes in status.
2. A new online proposal system to be developed allowing proponents and the broad community a better way to provide feedback on existing standards and any proposed changes or new areas of activity.
3. Moving from the status quo, Standards Australia to take responsibility for conducting stakeholder and community consultation on all standards development project proposals.
4. Standards Australia to simplify the proposal process with streamlined and more effective tools and processes, including considering new technologies such as bots and artificial intelligence to assist proponents in navigating the process as a supplement to existing engagement resources.
5. Broader ownership and assistance to be provided by Standards Australia through the proposal and consultation processes.

C. More proactive quality assurance

It is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. Proposals for new work to be assessed and approved monthly. Practically, this could mean that Project Prioritisation rounds would no longer take place. Proposals would instead be accepted at any time subject to quality, Net Benefit, stakeholder support assessment and contributor resource availability assessment.

2. Proposals to be assessed and approved by Standards Australia's Production Management Group (PMG). Resources to be determined and monitored on an ongoing basis by Standards Australia management - and if decisions need to be made on prioritisation of resources, it will be escalated to the Standards Development and Accreditation Committee (SDAC).
3. The online proposal system to be scalable and fit for projects' scope (i.e. proposal for a new standard has more detailed requirements than a revised text amendment).
4. The process for International identical adoptions to be further streamlined with a simple, online proposal and appropriate workflows triggering consultation and project approval.
5. A fast-track International identical adoption process to be developed to facilitate parallel adoptions where appropriate.
6. A Systematic Review process to be implemented with appropriate and automated workflows supporting Technical Committee outcomes and proposal development. (i.e. questions around scope, what needs to change if/when committee decides a revision is needed)
7. Non-contentious amendments/revisions to be balloted as part of a combined proposal/ approval process. If no objections/comments submitted at Public Comment, automatically proceed to publication.

2. Committee Composition

B. More open process

Standards Australia to, on a pilot basis:

1. Open up community access to information about Technical Committee membership and contribution by publishing information about members and their interests.
2. Supplement existing constituent based representation with additional expert and community based contribution.
3. Look at and trial different contribution models to balance constituent based representation with expert contribution.
4. Actively manage the balance of committee representation to increase diversity in all areas of activity.
5. Track outcomes of projects and continue to evolve the open model to achieve a balance of openness and constituent based representation.

C. More proactive quality assurance

As a second pilot project for committee composition, Standards Australia to:

1. Identify skills, knowledge and experience requirements in a particular area.
2. Build committee membership on an invitation basis around the skills requirements.
3. Appoint members based on technical, regulatory and public policy merit, and community impact.
4. Make publicly available records of meetings and decisions made as part of the development process.

5. Make the process transparent to nominating organisations and other constituent based representatives.
6. Track outcomes of projects and continue to evolve the open model through post project dialogue and assessment from all affected stakeholders.

3. Development and drafting

B. More open process

It is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. Standards Australia to develop a publicly available ‘bulletin board’ type public portal with information on Standards, Proposals and current Projects. Capacity for stakeholders to “follow” a Standard and be notified of progress.
2. All projects being undertaken to have a high level dashboard available to the broad community with metrics on high-level progress measurement and project milestones.
3. Project Delivery Plans to be made public for all work in development.
4. Projects to be piloted where all documents (minutes, drafts, committee information) are made publicly available and interested parties can provide their comments on an ongoing basis.

C. More proactive quality assurance

It is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. Standards Australia to regularly review and enforce new guidelines for Chairpersons with oversight shifting from Standards Australia staff to Standards Australia's Production Management Group (PMG).
2. Facilitation training to be provided for all Chairpersons in person or electronically.

Committee members

3. Committee activity, performance and attendance measured and made available to committee members and Nominating Organisations. New rules to be developed for the management of direct contributors to development work.

Drafting leaders

4. Standards Australia to make available a resource pool of technical writers engaged to support complex or contentious technical writing. Allocation of resources to be prioritised against criteria focussing on complexity, speed to market and Net Benefit.

Facilitators

5. Standards Australia to put in place systems to support the engagement of a pool of paid, vetted and skills-assessed independent facilitators to lead and guide committees with large, complex and contentious work programs.

Project Management

6. Across all projects, a workshop approach to kick-off meetings to be implemented, in order to:
 - gain commitment to the project,
 - share relevant information,
 - produce a clear forward plan, and
 - confirm commitment to action and deliver within a strict project schedule.
7. Further resources on Learning & Development to be provided with case studies and sharing knowledge base.
8. Increased use of project surveys to ascertain Project Management, Committee and Chair's performance.
9. Standards Australia to also investigate, pilot and implement a recognition and reward system for Project Managers, Technical Committees, Chairpersons and Drafting Leaders.
10. Mediation capabilities to be built within the Standards Australia team, and additionally mediation capability to be in-sourced on a needs basis within a framework.

4. Public comment

B. More open process

It is proposed that Standards Australia consider the following areas for further investigation and piloting:

1. Standards Australia to better promote and run public comment directly from its own website.
2. Red line changes to be made available on public comment drafts, indicating changes made to existing standards.
3. On a pilot basis, plain English commentary to be released at the time of public comment to seek to engage a broader community base to development work.
4. Decisions on comments made through public comment to be made publicly available except in exceptional circumstances as determined by Standards Australia.
5. Ability to comment directly on a draft and solutions to be investigated regarding responding to public comments and making public comment resolution publicly available.
6. Standards Australia to pilot platforms for displaying, capturing and resolving comments.

5. Voting approval

B. More open process

1. To investigate and pilot other means of resolving negative ballots, when other ballot criteria have been met. One such option may be to develop an appeals process that gives the opportunity for negative balloters to appeal a committee's decision, rather than being given the power of veto.
2. Standards Australia to pilot complete transparency of process making it publicly available how each technical committee member has voted.

C. More proactive quality assurance

To be referred to company governance review.

6. Maintenance

A. More strategic approach

1. Refer to Prioritisation of the Work Program.
2. Refer to Public Comment proposals and consider expansion to Identical Adoptions process.

B. More open process

Standards Australia to make publicly available its international work program and delegate attendance at International Standards Development meetings, including details on Heads of Delegation.

Next Steps

This paper has been developed with the intent of seeking feedback and input from stakeholders to refine ideas and suggestions, including priority areas Standards Australia should focus on.

Workshops will be held in Sydney (17 April 2018), Canberra (18 April 2018) and Melbourne (19 April 2018) to gauge such responses. A webinar will also be held for those unable to attend the sessions in person.

Written feedback can also be submitted on tgr@standards.org.au. Feedback is sought from stakeholders by Tuesday, 15 May 2018.

Once Standards Australia collates the inputs and has a better understanding of priorities and stages for implementation, it will release a Roadmap and Implementation plan. It is intended that most, if not all of the initiatives to be implemented, will be further developed in consultation with stakeholders.

About Standards Australia

Founded in 1922, Standards Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, recognised by the Commonwealth Government as the peak non-government Standards development body in Australia. It is charged by the Commonwealth Government to meet Australia's need for contemporary, internationally-aligned Standards and related services. The work of Standards Australia enhances the nation's economic efficiency, international competitiveness and contributes to community demand for a safe and sustainable environment.

www.standards.org.au