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**GRAEME BARR**  
**Architects**

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20/4/2006

Productivity Commission                      PC1/20060420  
by email:  
**standards@pc.gov.au**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: RE: REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH  
STANDARDS AUSTRALIA LIMITED AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
TESTING AUTHORITIES, AUSTRALIA**

We are making a submission in response to your call for submissions for a study into the relationship between the government and Australian Standards Ltd being undertaken by the Productivity Commission.

The problem with standards is that they are good documents but nobody seems to use them much in the building industry because they are too expensive. Apprentices are trained by tradespeople who were trained by tradespeople in traditional method of construction. Buildings either get under built affecting structural viability or overbuilt affecting the price of buildings.

Very few architects, building designers, engineers, contractors and subcontractors own more than 10 standards and yet there are thousands which relate to the building industry and 149 referenced standards in the Building Code of Australia alone.

To own a complete set of building standards would cost around \$20000 and this cost and the cost of maintaining these standards is beyond the means of most firms. To keep a current copy of the BCA with 149 referenced standards costs about \$1300 per year.

With the advent of the internet all other laws in Australia are more widely

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accessible free on the internet. Local Council Development Control Plans and Local Environmental Plans, state laws, road rules, etc are all almost universally now available free on the internet. Why are the laws relating to making anything in Australia so expensive?

It also seems wrong to have a company listed on the share market having control of our building laws. SAI Global has a responsibility to its shareholders to increase profits and dividends one could argue, more so, than any responsibility to the Australian public to provide more effective access to the laws of construction in our country.

The number of standards in the BCA has grown by about 50% from 99 to 149 standards over the last couple of years. This is growing beyond the means of the users of the documents.

To have anything, and particularly buildings, well designed in Australia it is time for the government of Australia to provide Australian Standards in a low cost manner. This would give us a competitive advantage over the rest of the world and should not cost much if sent over the internet. We have moved beyond the cost of printed material in our modern world.

Yours Faithfully,

**Graeme J Barr**

**RAIA**

cc File