

*[Received by email 11/9/06]*

I submit the following comments regarding the draft report:

1. Sect 8.2, p 122 "Do technical committees have balanced representation?"

(a) We have had first hand experience with our competition (a large network of multinationals) 'capturing' a standards technical committee by holding effective veto by voting strength. We support the view expressed in the report that improvements are necessary (and achievable) in this regard.

(b) We support the view expressed in the report that Standards Australia's rationale for not making public technical committee member details are not convincing.

(c) We believe point 3 of recommendation 8.1 does not go far enough. It should be assumed that each member has a special interest in the topic of the committee. Consequently, we believe the members of the technical committee should sign a declaration detailing not only their employment (paid or voluntary) that relates to the topic of the committee, but also requiring them to detail any other special interest they might have whether it be related to their personal, business or government relationships and involvement. These statements should be collected and assessed by the Chair (or a superior) prior to commencement of the work of the committee, and the Chair should have the power to rebalance the committee in order to maintain fair representation. The action and rationale for rebalancing should also be on the public record and able to be appealed through the normal processes.

(d) The effective veto power of large interest groups, as noted on p126, is probably unavoidable. However, if that veto power is exercised on grounds that are technically baseless (for reasons such as maintaining a poor status quo in a particular industry), there should be recourse for that veto power to be challenged and potentially nullified. At present, if a complaint goes through the Standards Australia system, the procedures clearly state that the hearings do not have the power to discuss technical issues, so this avenue is most likely fruitless in challenging a veto. If the due diligence suggested in (c) above is adopted, this data can be used in conjunction with a record of who voted 'against' in order to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt whether or not a 'veto' was asserted. If there was an independent technical panel where those who voted 'against' were called to account for the technical reasons for their vote, this could be assessed by the panel and the veto overturned if it is reasonably clear that technical grounds are baseless. This might sound complicated, but is relatively straightforward to implement. 'Blocked' standards (such as parts of AS 1677 which were blocked) are of detriment to end-users, industry as a whole and the pursuit of best practice.

I hope these comments are of benefit.

Regards,

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