

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2012-13
13 February 2013

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Standards Australia

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Bushby

QUESTION No.: AI-168

1. What is the nature of the Department's interaction (if any) with Standards Australia?
2. Does the Department have any power to direct Standards Australia to undertake actions of any kind in relation to standards – and, if so, how (and how regularly) has this been exercised since the 2010 Federal election?

ANSWER

1. The department has had the following interactions with Standards Australia (SA):
 - The Trade and International Branch (on behalf of the Commonwealth) manages the relationship with SA via a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU, among other things, acknowledges SA as the nation's peak non-government standards development body and recognises SA as the Australian member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). The department provides financial assistance to SA under the Support for Industry Service Organisations (SISO) Program to represent Australian interests in key international standardisation bodies including the ISO and the IEC. A representative from the department is the Commonwealth Member representative of SA and manages the Commonwealth's representation on the SA Council and the Standards Development Committee.
 - The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) is a COAG standards writing body that is responsible for the National Construction Code (NCC). It is a joint initiative of all three levels of government in Australia and was established by an Intergovernment Agreement (IGA). The ABCB has a MoU with Standards Australia to provide the basis for cooperation in the development of Australian Standards that are referenced in the NCC. ABCB participates on Standards Australia technical committees for the purpose of ensuring that Australian Standards referenced in the NCC are consistent with the regulatory needs expressed through the ABCB IGA, and are suitable for regulatory use. The ABCB also has representation on the SA Council which is responsible for the general oversight of standardisation in Australia and the governance of SA.
 - The National Measurement Institute (NMI) is Australia's peak measurement body responsible for biological, chemical, legal, physical and trade measurement. NMI develops and maintains standards of measurement, chemical reference materials, and reference techniques for Australia's units of measurement from the national primary measurement

standards for the Metric (or S.I.) system right through to measurements made at the domestic trade level. NMI provides advice on measurement to the other bodies which form part of Australia's standards and conformance system, including SA.

- NMI contributes to several of SA's technical working groups, which develop standards as part of the Commonwealth's contribution under its Memorandum of Understanding with SA. NMI's technical expertise in metrology (measurement science) ensures that standards which describe measurement processes embody sound metrological principles. NMI is currently involved in the development of a number of specific standards, for example in the areas of high voltage testing and immunity to electromagnetic interference.
- NMI staff also represents SA on a range of international standardization committees including the ISO and the IEC. Participation in these committees ensures that Australia's interests are represented effectively in the development of international standards. A recent example of NMI's representation on these committees is with the ISO committee in the ongoing development of the standardization in the field of nanotechnologies.
- The department has provided funding to SA to support Australia's participation in the ongoing development of standards related to nanotechnology by the ISO. The ISO has a technical committee devoted to nanotechnology, TC-229, on which Australia is represented. As a part of this role, SA hosts a mirror committee of Australian stakeholders NT-001. The department is represented on this committee.
- An officer of the Small Business Division has attended SA working group meetings on review of AS/NZS1425 as an observer on two occasions, 29 March 2011 and 5 March 2013.
- Officers from the department participated in three meetings with SA on 16 October 2012, 20 November 2012, and 19 February 2013. The meetings were held in order to provide advice to the Human Resources and Employment: Workforce Planning Committee. The department is providing input on definitions for productivity, a formula for return on investment, case studies from the Regional Workforce Planning & Development Stocktake report of the Workforce Demand and Supply Principal Committee (SCOTESE) and case studies from the Tourism Employment Plans and Tourism employment hotspots.

2. No.