

Standards Australia - Project Prioritisation Process & Criteria Information Session 16-2-2010.

The consultation session at Standards Australia Sydney office was presented by John Castles, Collin Blair and Adrian Smith and was well attended by Committee Chairpersons. Similar meetings are to be held in each major Capital City; to cover the proposals in the following two documents;-

- A National Standardisation Strategy for Standards Australia
- Project Prioritisation Process and Criteria.

(Both documents have been posted onto the PPI Group website)

These documents are clear and reasonably detailed stating the reasons, direction, options and processes that will be adopted by Standards Australia for the approval of new projects that include the adoption of International Standards, the writing of new Australian Standards or the review or amendment of existing Australian Standards.

The strategic principles

The strategic principles to guide development, coordination and alignment of voluntary standards are:

- 1: Standards will benefit the Australian community;
- 2: Australia will maximise use of prevailing international standards;
- 3: Standards development will be driven by commitment of stakeholders; and
- 4: Australian Standards will only be produced where appropriate.

Key considerations and understandings are the national value of each project, Standards Australia's available resources and distribution of these resources across the twelve industry sectors.

Data was presented, covering historic and current situations, including the total number of outstanding projects under the various Pathways, the number of committees and project completion times, as evidence for change.

We were advised that the criteria, process for Proposal Submission with clear guidance on the Net Benefit will be on their web-site by the end of February 2010, the close-off date for the first bi-annual review and evaluation of submissions is the 30th April 2010 and the project prioritisation and selection process is expected to be in place by 30 June 2010

Activities and Projects

The Discussion Papers provide an overview of the proposed criteria and process for the submission, assessment, prioritisation and selection of project proposals to be resourced by Standards Australia.

The proposed process and criteria will apply to the assessment of requests for support for activities and projects including:

- New or revised Australian Standards or joint AS/NZS Standards;
- Australian or joint adoptions of International Standards;
- New or revised Handbooks or other publications;
- Australian involvement in International Standards development; and
- Secretariat support for ongoing oversight of national schemes.

Pathways

In November 2009, Standards Australia announced it would continue to direct its resources to the core function of Standards development through support of the following pathways:

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- **Standards Australia Driven**

Standards Australia Driven projects must be approved for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process. This pathway primarily relies on Standards Australia's resources, project management expertise and infrastructure. Standards Australia Driven projects require commitment and active contribution from stakeholders over a defined period of time.

- **Committee Driven**

Committee Driven projects may be eligible for Standards Australia resourcing through the prioritisation process but with the main contribution coming from stakeholders. Under this pathway an appropriately skilled committee, in addition to providing the subject matter expertise, will take project management and secretariat responsibility for the project.

- **Bureau**

Bureau projects are resourced and managed by stakeholders with minimal Standards Australia resourcing allocated through the prioritisation process. Under this pathway, a single legal entity acts as a 'bureau' which takes responsibility for managing the committee, its activities and projects under a formal agreement with Standards Australia.

This above framework was developed in conjunction with, and has the support of, the Commonwealth Government and major member groups.

In addition, the stakeholder funded Collaborative pathway is also available:

- **Collaborative**

The Collaborative pathway offers stakeholders choice in resourcing levels and project timeframes. Collaborative projects will be subject to the same project proposal and Net Benefit requirements and will be assessed on the same criteria, but will not be prioritised and resourced as part of the twice yearly assessment and prioritisation process.

Net Benefit

Since 2008 the need to define the project criteria, including the Net Benefit, has been required for all new Standards projects.

Now, the main criterion for project prioritisation is Net Benefit to the Australian community, but the other criteria also considered are:

- Strategic alignment to national interest and public policy issues;
- Evidence of market failure;
- References in legislation;
- International alignment;
- Breadth and depth of application; and
- Industry sector.

Submissions or a program of work can be proposed under a Single Net Benefit case and Standards Australia should be contacted for guidance on what will need to be provided.

Net Benefit Criteria – Detail & Comment

Public Health and Safety

- Describe how the Standard will improve public and/or workplace health or safety;
- Demonstrate that the Standard is the most appropriate method to improve health or safety; and
- Summarise the overall health and safety impact of the Standard.

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Social and Community

- Consider the social and community impact of the Standard including 'intangible' costs and benefits borne by different sectors of the community, including the most vulnerable consumers or end users (such as better information; improvements to products and services; more reliable outcomes); and
- Summarise the overall social and community impact of the Standard.

Environmental

- Consider the environmental impact of the Standard, including 'intangible' costs and benefits (e.g. noise; pollution; amenity); and
- Summarise the overall environmental impact of the Standard.

Competition

- Describe how the Standard enables international alignment in global markets;
- Identify potential competition restrictions or improvements that may result from the Standard;
- Identify potential impacts upon innovation;
- Detail how the Standard can enable most widely used technology and/or supports international interoperability (demonstrate if applicable); and
- Summarise the overall impacts on competition.

Economic

- Consider the economic impact of the Standard over its life on different sectors of the community, such as consumers, manufacturers, small business, suppliers etc;
- Detail the impacts which may include elements such as increased/decreased costs; increased/reduced utility; redistribution of wealth; inequitable impacts across or between sectors; inequitable impacts on the most vulnerable consumers or end users; employment; economic growth or contraction, productivity outcomes; and
- Summarise the overall economic impact on the community.

Prioritisation and selection

Prioritisation and selection of projects will be determined by the Standards Development Committee using the framework outlined in the Paper.

The Collaborative pathway for Standards development remains in place offering stakeholders choice in resourcing levels and project timeframes. Collaborative projects will be subject to project proposal, assessment criteria and Net Benefit requirements but will not be prioritised and resourced as part of the twice yearly assessment and prioritisation process.

The project prioritisation and selection process is expected to be in place before 30 June 2010

During question time, which went for an additional half hour, the comments from the attendees were varied but only a few seemed to embrace the proposal.

On a positive note, other attendees advised that their industry organisations have already adopted the collaborative pathway and are controlling the process themselves. Comments relating to ISO/IEC committee participation and also defending the credibility of Australian Standards were numerous.

Although comments seemed to be recorded; attendees were encouraged to email comments, queries and suggestions to prioritisation@.org.au by 26th March 2010.

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Questions & Issues raised at meeting

- That Strategic Principle 4 sounds apologetic when in fact Standards Australia 'punches above its weight' in development and input to Standards.
- No process for withdrawal of existing Australian Standards is included in the doc's.
- Will Regulators accept International Standards and approval Marks and if so will it be done on a consistent National basis?
- Previous difficulty for Government Departments to remove references to redundant from their Regulations may be a problem.
- What constitutes a 'Project' under this process, what about a simple correction?
- Will any revision of an Australian Standard or other document need to be justified by an application and Net Benefit analysis?
- How will the application be generated following a review (10 years) of an Australian Standard if the original committee has been disbanded or is inactive?
- The Strategic Principle 2 should encompass requirement for active participation in ISO/IEC development committees.
- The 'Project' concept is not the best way to look at membership of ISO committees, rather a 'relationship' is the only process to ensure Australian input in ISO/IEC standards.
- Standards Australia indicated its non-acceptance of 'ongoing committee participation' (ISO/IEC) or unending projects, surely this must be reconsidered.
- Concern was expressed over Standards Australia's ability and available resources to carry on the Prioritisation Process due to the perceived variety, detail and quantity of projects and possible re-submissions.
- The responsiveness of the bi-annual review and approval process is questioned.
- Could a different or simpler process and criteria for Minor projects be adopted?
- Is there any provision for an 'Urgent' approval, does this fall under the 'Critical Requirement' guiding principle?
- Contradiction or ambiguity between the provision of Standards Australia's resources for the Collaborative pathway as written in the 'Overview' and 'Q&A' sections.
- The 'Single Net Benefit Case' is not adequately explained in the document.
- The make up of the Standards Australia's Development Committee was not adequately explained.
- Under the Committee, Bureau and Collaborative pathways will the committee members have access to all the required Standards and documents from Standards Australia.
- Will committee members on Collaborative committees have the same legal protection afforded them as those on Standards Australia Driven committees?
- Will public comments and responses be made available for public scrutiny?
- Will there be adequate time to address the issues raised before the first bi-annual review, evaluation and prioritization or are the dates fixed?

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- Members Additional questions & comments

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Observations

To those serving on Australian Standards Committees it has been obvious that the resources available over the last few years have deteriorated and consultation regarding policy changes and direction has been poor, therefore a change management and process is urgently required.

This consultative process should be seen as an opportunity to understand and comment on the principles, pathways and processes for submission, assessment and prioritization.

When preparing a project submission under this new scheme, members should ensure that they have researched the project and options thoroughly, enabling them to respond promptly to requests or objections.

Recommendations

I recommend that PPI Group Executive and members at least read the 'Project Prioritisation Process and Criteria' document and that it be listed as an agenda item for discussion at the General Meeting on 23rd February 2010.

Further, that the organisation and individual members email any comment or concerns they have with the new scheme to Standards Australia, to ensure consideration of their points and a reasonable transition to these new procedures.