



## World Standards Day 2023 Ai Group Standards Awards

*Speech delivered by Innes Willox, Chief Executive, Australian Industry Group*

**T**hank you for the opportunity to celebrate World Standards Day with you and speak on the topic of standards. Note that it is actually on 14 October which is this Saturday. It will be my pleasure to also acknowledge the efforts of two of our members with the *Ai Group Standards Next Generation Award* and *Ai Group Standards Development Award*. Ai Group initiated the Award in 2022 and the then winner was Dennis Galvin of Legrand. It is a great opportunity for us to say thanks to you, our members.

Ai Group is proud to be the leading contributor to the development of Australian Standards in Australia. We have 261 representatives (a number that varies weekly) sitting on Standards Australia's technical committees covering diverse topics from child restraints to artificial intelligence. Many representatives also sit on the equivalent ISO and IEC committee to ensure that Australia's voice is heard. Over 20 of our representatives also chair the committees they sit on – this is a testimony to the expertise they hold and the respect that they are held in. Ai Group estimates that our members' contribution in time to standards development is over one million dollars annually which is magnified many times over with the impact of the standards they develop on the Australian economy.

Ai Group's engagement with Standard Australia is not a passive one. We are liaising with their staff weekly and when our representatives encounter issues we stand behind them. For example only a two months ago I met with the Chair of Standards Australia to convey our members' concerns to her regarding the re-constituted Committee EL-001 Electrical wiring rules.

Standards operate behind the scenes and underpin the nation's economic progress. Standards, to the untrained eye, might appear mundane, yet they are the silent architects of progress. In essence, standards are the set of guidelines and specifications that ensure that products, processes, and services meet specific quality, safety, and performance criteria. They form the invisible scaffolding upon which innovation, trade, and industry build their structures.

In Australia, our members' unwavering commitment to standards has helped us build a reputation for excellence across many sectors.

While we acknowledge the importance of international standards, let's not forget the indispensable role played by our own Standards Australia. This organisation has been a guardian for over 100 years of the standards development process that has produced Australian Standards covering a wide range of products and services that have allowed our industry to respond to changes in technology and community expectation. Its mission is to develop and maintain standards that make a positive impact on our economy and society. Standards Australia also champions Australian expertise on the global stage and in many ways provides a passport to international markets.

More and more our national standards are adoptions of international standards to ensure our markets are aligned with the global economy. Organisations such as ISO and IEC hold pivotal roles in establishing international benchmarks. These international standards play a fundamental role in an era where borders are increasingly porous, and global trade dominates many industries.

ISO and IEC standards provide a common language for businesses and industries worldwide, ensuring that Australian products and services are both compatible and competitive. They remove trade barriers and offer access to new markets, a facet of paramount significance in our interconnected world.

The economic implications of standards are profound. They yield greater production efficiency, higher product quality, and, consequently, enhanced competitiveness. In a nation like Australia, where trade is a cornerstone of our economy, adherence to international standards opens doors to a broader spectrum of markets.

Yet, the value of standards extends beyond opening doors to export opportunities. Standardisation engenders cost savings through economies of scale and fosters consumer trust. When consumers spot a product bearing a recognized standard mark, they discern that it complies with specific criteria, elevating their confidence and influencing purchasing choices.

Standards development isn't confined to economic considerations. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens. Think of electrical appliances in our homes or safety standards within the automotive industry. These exist due to standards to guarantee the trustworthiness of products that impact our daily lives.

In addition, standards drive innovation. By requiring performance rather than prescriptive requirements, they stimulate companies to invest in research and development, leading to

the creation of improved and novel products. Without standards, chaos would reign, and innovation would be stifled.

Our journey through the world of standards would be incomplete without acknowledging the challenges and opportunities it presents. The standards landscape isn't static; it evolves, necessitating adaptability. Rapid technological advancements, shifting consumer preferences, and the imperative of environmental sustainability demand agile and responsive standards.

Australia stands at a unique vantage point to participate in this evolution. We have the opportunity to shape international standards that address not only current requirements but also anticipate and tackle future challenges, such as sustainability, digital transformation, and cybersecurity.

In conclusion, the importance of standards development in Australia is not to be underestimated. It is the linchpin of our economy, the guardian of our safety, and the catalyst for innovation. Embracing international standards, such as those set by ISO and IEC, not only widens our global horizons but also ensures our industries remain competitive.

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