

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
DELEGATED LEGISLATION**

**INQUIRY INTO ACCESS TO AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS  
ADOPTED IN DELEGATED LEGISLATION**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
FRIDAY, 21 AUGUST 2015**

**SESSION ONE**

**Members**

**Mr P. Abetz (Chair)**  
**Hon Robin Chapple (Deputy Chair)**  
**Mr G.M. Castrilli**  
**Ms S.F. McGurk**  
**Mr P. Papalia**  
**Hon Martin Pritchard**

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**Hearing commenced at 10.32 am****Mr ALAN McCALLUM****Acting State Manager, Master Electricians Australia, sworn and examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome you to meeting. Before we begin, I must ask you to take either the oath or affirmation.

[Witness took the oath.]

**The CHAIR:** You will have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of the hearing for the record. Please be aware of the microphones; try to talk in the direction of the microphone, and ensure you do not cover them with papers or make too much noise because that makes it difficult for Hansard. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you want to make a confidential statement during today’s proceedings, you should request the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

Would you like to make an opening statement to the committee or do you want us to hop into the questions?

**Mr McCallum:** I am quite happy to hop into the questions.

**The CHAIR:** Does Master Electricians provide any kind of advisory service to your members with regard to providing access to or copies of relevant standards or giving advice on their application or meaning; and, are you aware of any external advisory service regarding standards that relate to your members?

**Mr McCallum:** We do have a technical department within our association that does offer support to members, and for that we do have to refer to and have access to current standards in a limited capacity, depending on what we have been allowed to access via, in this case, SAI Global. There are a number of standards we do not have access to without purchasing those standards. As for anybody else being able to provide this to our members, we believe that is not the case; there is no other way that our members can get hold of information relative to those standards other, obviously, than paying for them themselves.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** You said “limited access” to SAI. What do you mean by “limited access”? For your business to provide the full range of services and advice to your members, by saying “limited access” are you saying that you cannot provide that 100 per cent information?

**Mr McCallum:** Sorry, I will clarify. What I am saying is that we can access certain documents without purchasing them. That is what I am getting at. We do have access to it all—there are no dramas there—but some of it we do have to purchase accordingly.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** When you say “without purchasing”, how is that established?

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**Mr McCallum:** We have an arrangement with SAI. There is a licence that we do pay for to gain that limited access, but again, as I said, to go further into it and depending on the standards we are actually trying to obtain, we may have to purchase or pay extra.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** I am not sure whether you want to answer this, but what is the extent of that payment of that licence?

**Mr McCallum:** I am not privilege to what those payments are; I do not have that information.

**The CHAIR:** Is that because Master Electricians is a national body and you access that via the federal office? How does that actually work for you in Western Australia?

**Mr McCallum:** From a state point of view, we have access through a log-in system that has been provided through that licensing that we have been provided with. Exactly how the background of that works, I am not able to comment on because I do not know.

**The CHAIR:** Would it be possible for us to find that out from your federal office?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes, it is possible that we could find out exactly what the process is.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Can you find that out for us?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** That would be helpful to us.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Did I understand correctly that you were saying that the organisation has access to some standards, and others you are required to purchase?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** So those you have access to obviously are of limited use, so only your direct staff can use them?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes, only our direct staff can look at them. We can advise on what we can see, but they are copyright protected and everything like that as per normal, so we can only advise on what we can actually see within that standard to assist our members.

**The CHAIR:** So you cannot print it off and give it to the guy and say, "This is what you need to do"?

**Mr McCallum:** No, we are not allowed to pass it on to any member in any way, shape or form.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** You made an interesting point. When one of your staff conveys to one of your members the intent of a standard, could there ever be an issue where the real interpretation of the standard might be diminished or changed in the passage of that information?

**Mr McCallum:** There could be, like there would be in any conversation that anybody had with any individual at any time or point in time. It comes to interpretation, correct.

**The CHAIR:** Do your electricians, as far as you are aware, only access information about standards via your office, or are there other services out there in the marketplace that provide advice to electricians on Australian Standards?

**Mr McCallum:** To the best of our knowledge, we are the only way that our electrical contracting members can find out that relevant information, other than, of course, purchasing it themselves. As to keeping them up to date, again, without us they would probably have a limited way of finding out what has been changed or updated.

[10.40 am]

**The CHAIR:** I have heard from electricians in my electorate that when they ring EnergySafety for advice, if they are not quite certain about the technical requirements for something, EnergySafety actually refused to give advice because there are legal issues around that. EnergySafety itself, even

though it requires electricians to adhere to certain Australian Standards, is actually not in a position to make those standards available. Would that be the case?

**Mr McCallum:** I cannot comment on what or how EnergySafety might look at it. I will give you a bit more of a background of where I sit within the association currently. I am sitting in an acting chair as a state manager until we fill that position, so there are a number of areas that I may not have been brought up to speed with in relation to certain aspects of it, only purely through the timing side of things. This has all just happened.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Would it be normal for an electrician to have a copy of all the standards that he would normally refer to?

**Mr McCallum:** In the perfect world, it would be very good.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** But is it normal?

**Mr McCallum:** It is not normal, no. It is normal for them to have standards of certain aspects of the industry that they might be working in within relation to the type of work they are doing, but they would not have every single standard relating to the electrical industry, no.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** You have actually raised some really important points. Is it possible to get a list of the number of standards that you actually have a licence for?

**Mr McCallum:** Again, I would have to ask the question. I would have to find out.

**The CHAIR:** We will send a letter to you detailing the questions we are asking.

**Mr McCallum:** That is great; cheers.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** And on that, those standards that you may from time to time require that are not within your licence. Because you did indicate that there are other standards that from time to time you have to go and get. Also, of those licences you have to go and get, do you pay the normal commercial rate?

**Mr McCallum:** To the best of my knowledge.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** Alan, when standards are updated, what is the process by which you are notified or your association is notified that out of 200 standards that apply to your industry, two have been updated?

**Mr McCallum:** There is a process where you can elect to be on an email notification process whereby any updates to any standards, you are notified, and our association would be on that. As to whether members are on that, I could not comment. Personally, outside of the role I play now, I have been on that particular list for a number of years because it is the only way that you generally find out that something has changed, unless go to an association and ask.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** And on the flipside of that, if members do not elect to be on the email notification, they would not be notified and they would have to go and check themselves every time to see if there is an update.

**Mr McCallum:** Yes, and they may also not be aware that there is such a process available.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that you have only been in the role for a relatively short time. Are you aware of what level of complaints there might from your members about the difficulty in accessing standards? Is that something that has come up within your association?

**Mr McCallum:** It does come up. Irrespective of the role I play now, in my previous role and so forth, yes, you hear complaints quite regularly, and they mostly come around the back of, "I've got to get the latest standard on this particular topic or procedure—whatever—and now I have to pay a fortune for it again; I bought it two or three years ago and paid a fortune then, and I am now paying again." There may have only been a couple of changes in that time.

**The CHAIR:** What sort of money are electricians paying for the standard?

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**Mr McCallum:** They vary. The common one electricians use would be AS 3000, which is the wiring rules. To buy a new copy of the wiring rules currently is around about \$200 to \$210—something like that. There are normally one, two or maybe three lots of amendments that come out over a period of time, and by that I mean a number of years, that they then have purchase for around about \$60 to \$80 per amendment. Because it is a case of either sticking those amendments in your current book or losing track of them, they will purchase another book. Consequently, it can be an ongoing cost for just that particular standard, which in our industry we rely on as being our bible—that tells us what we can and cannot do from an install point of view.

**The CHAIR:** Is it more the printed version that is being used by electricians, or do they have it on their iPad kind of thing?

**Mr McCallum:** Most are printed. You do get some contractors out there who go for the soft copy version and get it that way, but a majority of them are hard copy.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** Just to be clear, if you purchased a standard, say, two months ago and there is an update, there is no set time; you buy the right for 12 months. If there are any updates for the 12-month period, they are not free, so there is none of that. So every time there is change to a standard, it does not matter how big or small it is, you have to pay \$200 again?

**Mr McCallum:** Or purchase the amendments at a cheaper price.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** In your industry you do not say, “Okay, I’m going to buy that standard”, and you get any update gratis for a 12-month period?

**Mr McCallum:** No. They vary when the amendments can come out, but normally we are talking every couple of years. They could be a number of clauses within the Standard that have changed or a minimal amount, but you are required to purchase on top of what you have already paid for it at the start.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Following on from that, I am trying to delve down. You buy a standard for \$210, and then six months later there is an amendment. You pay \$60 for the amendment, and at the end of the year if somebody else wants to buy the standard with the amendment, they would pay \$210 not \$270?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes, \$210. The book is reprinted when the amendments come out, so you get the option of either purchasing the amendments or repurchasing the book with the new amendments in it, and the book will tell you whether they have got the new amendments one, two, three or whatever in there.

**The CHAIR:** How frequently are there changes to the standards?

**Mr McCallum:** The latest AS 3000 came out in 2007, and we have had two amendments since.

**The CHAIR:** So it is not very often?

**Mr McCallum:** It does vary depending on what changes within the industry, but normally, on average, it could be two to three different types, and then they will normally go to a reproduction of that book completely.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Are you aware of whether there is a difference between the online copy and the printed copy?

**Mr McCallum:** The online copy and the printed copy should be exactly the same, just a different format.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** If somebody is working from a hard copy and not online, there may be occasions that an electrician in the field operating on a hard copy would not necessarily know there has been an upgrade to the standard and could be working under the old standard without knowing there has been an update. Is that possible?

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**Mr McCallum:** It is quite probable. There are a number of reasons that might occur. One of the main reasons that occurs is not through inadvertently knowing, it is through cost. They have not purchased the amendments or the latest version as it has happened throughout the course. Nine times out of 10, that is because of the value they have to fork out for that particular upgrade. We are talking from apprentice level all the way up to tradie level.

**The CHAIR:** How many electricians are in Western Australia, roughly?

[10.50 am]

**Mr McCallum:** I do know that there are approximately 4 500 contractors in WA, and there are probably around about 35 000 electricians within Western Australia. Again, that is an estimate; it is not a guaranteed figure.

**The CHAIR:** Most contractors, I guess, would have a copy of the standard and try to keep up to date.

**Mr McCallum:** I would hope so

**The CHAIR:** One would hope so. But the employees of an electrical contractor would rely on the boss having the update, or do they tend to get their own copies?

**Mr McCallum:** In a perfect world it would be great if every electrician, including apprentices, had their own copy, the reason being that when you are on the job site doing the work, that is your reference material. That is what tells you that you can leave that site and it is safe to do so, based on what those regulations and rules have told you. For them to have only one copy as part of a business would be very risky, which is the reason that standards exist, because that is what does tell you what is right from wrong, what you should and should not do, and when it is safe to leave or not safe to leave.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** We are talking about probably the main one that you use, but there would be many others that you would use as you come into different types of work that you would not often do maybe.

**Mr McCallum:** That is right, and those particular ones would be a case whereby the contractor would possibly only have only the one copy at the office, but it may be available to the staff to look at as they need to. The AS 3000 is the one that all electricians use on a daily basis, but the rest of them are going to be dependent on what it is you are doing and the type of work and so forth.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Just on that previous question that I asked, you might be able to provide us with a list of some of those other ones that you from time to time utilise.

**Mr McCallum:** Yes, for sure.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a particular problem faced by the industry regarding occupational health and safety regulation issues referred to in Australian Standards?

**Mr McCallum:** Not as such. A lot of the standards do not really go back to work health and safety or occupational health and safety standards or legislation. There are the odd ones that refer to regulations, which people do have access to. So, no, there is not really a big cause where it does impact on that work health and safety environment.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** As a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, which deals with regulations, I was very interested in that comment you just made that a standard can refer to a regulation.

**Mr McCallum:** I will give you an example. There is a new standard—well, not a new standard; it has been around for a little while—4836, which is to do with safe working on or near low-voltage electrical installations. It refers to safety precautions. An example would be an isolation lockout and test procedure, which is a safety concern, hence why it is a standard that we make recommendation that all contractors have, because that stipulates certain safety precautions that they should take in

relation to the type of work they are doing. It does not reference directly back to a regulation from an occupational health and safety point of view, if that makes sense.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any suggestions for the committee to consider regarding greater access to standards for businesses—say, for electricians or contractors?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What do you think your members would like to see?

**Mr McCallum:** Cheaper. At the end of the day it is the price that decides what they can and cannot afford to do. It should not come down to that from a safety perspective at all. Having said that, it is very hard for a contractor to gain or get back the costs involved in those standards that they may have to purchase for any given job they may be doing. Again, it comes down to that availability and cost factor. If it could be put in a cheaper way access-wise, using the AS 3000 for argument's sake and the amendments, if you did not have to pay for the amendments on top of the book that actually told you how to do job properly. It is not the contractor or the electrician's fault that someone has found some changes that need to be made for safety reasons to a document that they then in turn have to then pay for on top of the document they bought originally.

**The CHAIR:** For yourself, as a representative body, I guess, of electricians, in terms of accessibility, then, the main factor would be —

**Mr McCallum:** It would still come down to that cost. Obviously, from an association point of view, we are there to assist our associate members to make the right choices and understand the legislation. At the end of the day, we expect our contractors to have the standards required for the business that they undertake. But, like any standard or act, there are always understandings of how things are written, so they come to us to get that clarification. If we have access to that documentation—from the association's point of view, free access for obvious reasons; copyright and all that obviously needs to be in place; there are no dramas there—at least that way it is going to make it easier to make sure we are able to give them the relevant information.

**The CHAIR:** If the Australian Standards were, in an ideal world, all put on the internet and accessible free of charge and you could print off whatever you need for your business, what would you estimate that would save in your industry? Do you have any ideas of what is being spent by electricians?

**Mr McCallum:** I honestly could not put a figure on it. But standards normally—if you buy a non-AS 3000, for argument's sake—for anything other than that, you are paying anywhere between \$140 to \$170 for a standard, and we are talking about a book that is this thick. I could not tell you the number of pages in the largest one, but they are not huge documents. But the information that is within them is very relevant to the industry that we work in, and obviously what we are trying to do within this industry is make it safer. If we can access the documentation that allows us to do that, that has to be better for everyone.

**The CHAIR:** So you envisage that there would be a safety benefit to the community —

**Mr McCallum:** Huge; huge.

**The CHAIR:** — and to your members if they could access it on their iPad or computer at home or whatever and they could print off whatever pages they are working with on a particular job.

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** And by printing them off, they would always have the most up-to-date standards at that time, so there would not be any issue about working from a two-year-old document in that sense. So that would have some advantages there as well.

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**Mr McCallum:** It would certainly have advantages in that they would have access to the latest information. Obviously, I cannot sit here and say that every contractor in WA is going to read that standard and make sure they comply with it 100 per cent, but having access to it and the ability to read what they need to read and understand certainly will go a heck of a long way to improving the way the industry operates within WA.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** I know they cannot do it, but my head is spinning a bit about peak bodies like yourself having access to the whole standards at a reasonable price, and for your members to access it free after that. That would be a hell of an improvement, I think, for a start.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** If you have got, as you say, 35 000 members —

**Mr McCallum:** No, no. I said we have 35 000 electricians within Western Australia. I would like to have that many members.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** But if you have 35 000 electricians and each one of those has to have access to a standard and each one went out and bought one, that is \$35 million approximately. That is a hell of a lot of money.

**Mr McCallum:** It is a lot of money.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** That is assuming that all the standards are contained in one book.

**The CHAIR:** One of the interesting things we have learnt is that —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is assuming it is all in one book.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** That is what I am saying. That is right. If you are purchasing the standards, and if all the standards relating to the industry from A to Z are all in that one book—firstly, are they or not? I would not suspect they are. So there might be multiple facets of your industry that might be setting different standards. You might have to pay \$210 here, \$210 there, \$210 there and \$210 there. You cannot judge it.

**Mr McCallum:** Every standard comes separately; they do not come all in one book. The main book is that AS 3000 that we use on a daily basis, from an electrician's point of view. The rest are dependent on what type of activity you undertake, and, yes, they vary in price; and, yes, you might have an electrical contractor who requires 20 of those books and you might have one that requires only 10 of those books, so it does vary across the scale.

[11.00 am]

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** Alan, would you know how many of those books could relate to your whole industry?

**Mr McCallum:** No, not off the top of my head. It could be multiples. There are a number of them that are relatively used on a daily basis, but there are a number of them, as I said earlier, that you would only need for a specific job or a specific tender you have.

**The CHAIR:** So it seems there is a massive cost to industry to access these standards. One of the interesting things that is going through my head is that the total budget for Standards Australia is about \$20 million a year, and if that was funded by government, and in return all standards were put on an Australian Standards website and publicly available free of charge—you just print off whatever you want—that would actually have the potential of saving your industry and many industries massive sums of money in this digital age.

**Mr McCallum:** Not only saving them massive sums of money, but also making work and the environment in which they work in a heck of a lot safer.

**The CHAIR:** Because they are up to date?

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**Mr McCallum:** Because they have the latest information, and they are not assuming that the standard they have, which might have a date on it—it will have a date on it—whether that has been updated.

**The CHAIR:** Right.

**Mr McCallum:** You know what I mean? So unless they have been notified in some way to say, “Are you aware standard X, Y, Z has been updated? It is now this model or this version”, they are not going to know. So they will refer back to their old documentation, and unless they are a member of an association and decide to ring and ask, they are going to go with that standard that they have.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is pretty extraordinary that for whatever you pay for the standards—what did you say?

**Mr McCallum:** It is \$210 for the one standard.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** For one standard that you do not get notified for a certain amount of time; for that purchase, you get notified for five years of any changes.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any other questions any members want to ask or that you want to say to us, Alan, that you have not said yet?

**Mr McCallum:** From that point of view, obviously, we would love to see a change, purely based on the fact that we are talking about people’s lives at the end of the day, whether it is the electrician himself or whether it is the end consumer. The idea is that we all make sure we are doing everything we are supposed to do on a safe basis. We can only do that if we have access to the relevant documentation we need to do so. If we have to pay extra for it or pay exorbitant prices for it—we are not saying we want them all for free, we are just saying there needs to be some reasonable pricings put around it and some reasonable notifications, I suppose, that allow people to be aware that things have changed. That way, we can provide a safer workplace, as well as —

**The CHAIR:** In this digital age that would be so simple and inexpensive to do.

**Mr McCallum:** Yes.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** If you want a standard, how quickly can you access that? Say you are on a job and you suddenly have a standard you have to comply with or you have discovered, you then have to go to SAI Global. What is involved? Is that a phone call?

**Mr McCallum:** It depends on what you want. If you want a hard copy, it is a phone call, purchase it and they post it out. Depending on the post, which is obviously changing, that could take a week to two weeks or even three weeks.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** You could actually be held up on job?

**Mr McCallum:** Yes. Electronically you might get it a heck of a lot quicker; I cannot say how much quicker because I have never actually purchased one electronically. But I know the others have taken anything up to two or three weeks to come out.

**The CHAIR:** Even electronically?

**Mr McCallum:** No, not electronic ones. As I say, I do not know how quickly electronic ones would come out because I have never done it. But for paper ones, I do know of members who have had to wait two or three weeks for it to come out.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** So you have rolled up at a job, we have to have this new standard, and suddenly the job is on hold?

**Mr McCallum:** Nine times out of 10 you would expect that the contractor would know what was going to be required for the job he is going to do. The difference with the AS 3000—as I said, it is the electrician’s bible—is that, again, the work we do is very similar. Once you understand the ruling around it, you would only refer back to it when an amendment has come out to say has

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that particular rule changed. So going to an actual job, if you have done your homework you would have all the paperwork and understanding well and truly before that. So it really should not hold up any worksites.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** Alan, as a peak body have you, or have you in the past, made any recommendations to Standards Australia to actually initiate a new standard or a change of standard on behalf of the Western Australian industry, in terms of getting together with other peak bodies around the states of Australia? If you have, what has been the response and how long has it taken to be enacted?

**Mr McCallum:** I could not comment on how long it might have taken to enact. I can certainly say we do get involved in trying to assist and make those changes as needed. To what extent and at what level it occurs, again I could not answer.

**The CHAIR:** Anything else you want to add before we wrap up?

**Mr McCallum:** The one thing I will add is—just going back to that last question, actually—that we do have within our association individuals who do sit on the committee for AS 3000; I think it is called the EL1 committee. That committee is involved in regulation changing for that particular standard. So there are certain areas where we do get involved and sit on those types of committees.

**The CHAIR:** But sitting on those committees does not give you a discount on the final product?

**Mr McCallum:** Obviously.

**The CHAIR:** I knew what the answer was, but I just thought I would put it on record.

Thank you very much, Alan, for your time; I much appreciate it. You will be sent a transcript from Hansard of the proceedings today, and the letter accompanying that will indicate that you need to send it back within X number of days. If you do not send it back, we will assume it is correct.

**Mr McCallum:** No worries.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** You will receive the Hansard to see if there are any corrections you want to make.

**Hearing concluded at 11.06 am**

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