

SAI Global Loses Monopoly On Australian Standards

Following a decision from an independent arbitrator, Standards Australia have announced that any extended distribution agreement with SAI Global would be “non-exclusive” – a win for Australian businesses.

Currently, SAI Global own an exclusive 15-year license (with an additional 5-year option) to publish and distribute Australian Standards.

The arbitrator’s decision means that Standards Australia can now take steps to move beyond the exclusive distribution arrangements that have been in place with SAI Global since 2003.

Over the past year, the SIA, on behalf of the health and safety profession, has actively lobbied for an end to the 15-year monopoly distribution arrangements.

Standards Australia’s Chairman, Richard Brooks, said the arbitration decision was an exciting step towards delivering greater value and improving access to Australian Standards, while building capability and external partnerships to deliver new methods of distribution to end users.

“Improving every aspect of our work – from how we connect with contributors, to how we foster innovation and how we distribute our content has been a major part of our agenda.”

“However, as the world of publishing changes, we must also change to continue our strong, positive contribution to the community and empower those who use our content.”

SIA Chief Executive, David Clarke, congratulated Standards Australia on taking up the challenge of removing what has long been seen by the SIA as an unfair arrangement to Australian business.

“Standards are an important tool for Australian businesses in many ways, they play a vital role in understanding health and safety responsibilities and implementing good health and safety practice. The price of standards has been increasingly prohibitive and one of the key reasons has been the distribution monopoly. This announcement is the first step in seeing those costs come down.”

Mr Clarke said that the Institute would continue to take a strong interest in the development of the wider distribution market for Australian Standards, and that this announcement was only the first step.

“This is not just about medium and large enterprises. A million small businesses in this country do not access standards because of their cost which directly affects their health and safety. This recent decision will reduce costs which is a positive step, but there is still a case to be made for the Commonwealth to look at subsidising access for some areas of Australian business, especially small business.”

Standards Australia said exactly how the arbitrator’s decision would be implemented is still unclear, but that it is committed to starting the process sometime later this year. In the meantime, Australian Standards will continue to be distributed through SAI Global.

As part of this transition process, Standards Australia will soon begin an open consultation with stakeholders to understand how the current and future distribution models can deliver easier access for those who use Standards Australia’s content.

Standards Australia’s CEO, Bronwyn Evans, emphasised the importance of stakeholder engagement as part of the transition.

“Operating an open and transparent process is our core business. This is an opportunity to design a Standards Australia of the future that relies on all interested stakeholders, whose support and contribution will be vital in the improvement and innovation in the distribution of Australian Standards.”

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