



# Cyber and Critical Technology International Engagement Strategy (CCTIES)

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15 June 2020

Dr Tobias Feakin  
Australian Ambassador for Cyber Affairs  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
RG Casey Building, Sydney Ave  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Feakin

As you know, Standards Australia works closely with industry, government and the wider community to develop and adopt standards for every sector of the economy. Our work contributes to economic development by enabling trade, and addresses standardisation needs for strategic issues like emerging information technology, digital trade, cyber security and critical minerals.

Australia's International Cyber Engagement Strategy sets a strong foundation for cyber affairs as a strategic international policy issue. Standards are rightly called out as a requirement for enabling digital trade. Emphasis is placed on harmonisation of industry-led, technology-neutral standards across our region.

However, the digital landscape has changed rapidly since the Strategy was launched. And with the impacts of COVID-19, the urgency of working digitally is stronger than ever before. Moreover, standards are being used to leverage power and influence across a geo-strategic landscape with active, state-centric approaches threatening more inclusive and internationally focused stakeholder-led standards development.

Standards Australia therefore welcomes the development of the Cyber and Critical Technology International Engagement Strategy (CCTIES) to further position Australia as a dynamic and leading player in evolving cyber and critical technology affairs. Going forward, standards will remain central in guiding Australia's engagement in the region and beyond.

Standards Australia therefore strongly recommends:

1. Standards and conformance underpin the CCTIES.
2. In specific areas of Australian expertise and interest, government and industry collaborate with Standards Australia to drive current and new work at international level.
3. The Australian Government supports capacity building projects across the Indo-Pacific region to enable harmonisation of standards related to cyber and critical technology.

More details on these recommendations are provided below. For further discussion on our work in cyber and critical technology, please contact me directly at [adrian.oconnell@standards.org.au](mailto:adrian.oconnell@standards.org.au) or +61418977170.

Yours sincerely,



—Adrian O'Connell, Chief Executive Officer

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## Recommendation 1

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### *Standards and conformance underpin the CCTIES.*

Standardisation has traditionally sat outside of foreign and aid policymaking, but with the breadth of national interests now affected by standards, and the increasingly politicised environment that surrounds these highly technical discussions, the topic is swiftly moving up the agenda. Today, standards are used to influence political relationships and economic activity across countries in a complex geo-strategic landscape. In areas of emerging technology, states may lead targeted standardisation efforts for political and economic purposes, well beyond the traditional trade enabling interests that normally drives this work

The 2017 International Cyber Engagement Strategy confirms the value of standards and conformance, specifying that “the development and application of international standards play a key role in improving the quality and cyber security of digital products, systems and services across the globe, and assist in protecting governments, business and consumers alike.” As other countries in our region redouble efforts to influence the direction of standardisation and the content of critical standards, recognising the value for Australia of engagement in and with standards and conformance will become even more important in the CCTIES.

Standards Australia develops and adopts standards that are internationally-aligned, industry-led and technology-neutral. Under the CCTIES, Australia should promote harmonisation of such standards across the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Acknowledging the value of consensus based international standards — not just for cyber security but for key areas of critical technology — the 2020 CCTIES should position standards as a means for increased interoperability, reducing technical barriers and promoting international trade.

## Recommendation 2

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*In specific areas of Australian expertise and interest, government and industry collaborate with Standards Australia to drive current and new work at international level.*

### **Maximising International Memberships**

Standards Australia works with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC) – responsible for Australia’s membership and standardisation activities in the intergovernmental International Telecommunications Union (ITU) – to drive co-ordination between policy makers and technical experts and present a united voice for Australia in new and emerging technology areas such as AI, quantum computing and 5G.

As the Australian member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), Standards Australia also facilitates leadership and participation by Australian experts on those international technical committees. This ensures international standards are fit for purpose in the Australian context and reflect the innovation and expertise within our borders. Key focus areas relevant to the CCTIES include: Artificial Intelligence; Blockchain; Space Systems and Operations; Internet of Things; Critical Minerals; Cyber Security; Risk management; and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Participation in these international bodies enables Australia to drive new fields of technical activity for standardisation. Blockchain is a fitting example of Australia as a global leader, proposing a new area of work and delivering an ISO technical committee responsible for blockchain standards — a committee that Australia actively leads through holding the Secretariat. This approach should be replicated for new areas of critical technology.

### **Driving the Standardisation Agenda**

Australia could do more to actively drive the standardisation agenda. Where there are gaps and opportunities in the standardisation landscape, Australia could step up, propose new initiatives and take on increasing leadership roles. This is a model that relies on close collaboration among government, industry and Standards Australia. This should be endorsed and advanced through the new CCTIES.

The international standards system is founded on ‘one-member, one-vote’ so Australia’s voice only goes so far on its own. Building early support for our ideas will be critical to success. Working with a select coalition of countries with similar interests in emerging technologies can help Australian interests and proposals move forward at international level with greater confidence and coordination.

As part of this effort, Australia should seek to avoid duplication of standardisation efforts in forums that are less advantageous to Australia’s interests and support industry-backed, consensus-based, standards development models. We support additional resourcing for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to undertake work to advance and protect Australia’s interests through standardisation, mirroring the increased attention to this strategic activity by our allies and trade partners.

## Recommendation 3

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*The Australian Government supports capacity building projects in the Indo-Pacific region to enable harmonisation of standards related to cyber and critical technology.*

The 2017 strategy committed Australia to “supporting capacity building projects in the Indo-Pacific to encourage the harmonisation of international standards for digital goods, building trust and confidence in digital trade”. This should be enhanced in the 2020 CCTIES and Australian Government support for this work will be crucial.

Standards harmonisation supports trade agreements. This will be key as new partnerships such as IA-CEPA and PACER Plus (which contain chapters on standards and conformance) come into force. To harmonise standards related to cyber and critical technology, stronger National Standards Bodies around the region will be needed. Investing in institutional strengthening and capacity building so that developing country National Standards Bodies can contribute to societal progress and economic development while increasing uptake of cyber and critical technology standards, would be a mutually positive step forward for Australia and its neighbours.