



Fire Protection
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Life. Property. Environment.

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Mr Mark Fitt
Committee Secretary
Senate Economics Reference Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Fitt,

Response to question taken on notice from Senator Xenophon regarding whether Australian Standard AS 5113 could be improved in any way

Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia) would like to thank the Senate Economics References Committee for the opportunity to appear at the public hearing on Wednesday 19 July 2017 for the Senate Inquiry into Non-conforming building products.

At the end of the session at which I provided FPA Australia's submission, Senator Xenophon raised a question to be taken on notice as to whether Australian Standard AS 5113:2016, *Fire propagation testing and classification of external walls of buildings* could be improved in any way.

Following the public hearing I requested the advice of FPA Australia's Technical Services Department. Accordingly, this department consulted with our representatives on the Standards Australia technical committee FP-018 Fire Safety (the committee responsible for the development of AS 5113).

As a result of our consultation with our representatives on FP-018, FPA Australia provides the following feedback in response to your question:

- Our representatives are currently satisfied that AS 5113 could not be significantly improved at this time.
- This view is based on the process of industry engagement that was used to develop the method and the experience of test laboratories involved with using the test method to date to test building products.

We understand that tests that have been recently conducted using this standard and advised that it appears to be effective in identifying/failing poor performing products such as PE core ACP.

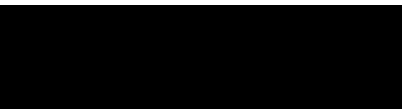
- The standard was developed by the FP-018 standards committee using input from the following sources to prepare the standard:
 - Existing international full-scale test methods
 - NFPA research on full-scale test methods for external cladding

- Consultation with a global fire safety engineering companies who have experience with the poor performance of APC cladding systems in the Middle East and the UK.
- Insurance industry FM Global who that has experience with full-scale testing and real world fires and their causes around the globe.
- Local fire authorities
- Local and international fire test laboratories
- Test methods are however subject to improvement of operational issues and practicality based on experience gained from undertaking tests. However, at this stage, no significant changes to this method have been identified as necessary.

Accordingly, FPA Australia can confirm in response to the question taken on notice from Senator Xenophon that we are currently satisfied that Australian Standard AS 5113 could not be significantly improved at this time.

In addition to the above, we note that during the public hearing Senator Kim Carr requested a copy of our opening remarks/statement (see page 16 of the Hansard transcript). As such, we have also attached a copy of this opening statement and the diagram which I presented.

Kind regards,



Scott Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Fire Protection Association Australia

Attachments:

- FPA Australia opening statement
- Diagram – Three pillars of building compliance and safety

FPA Australia Opening Remarks – Senate Inquiry 19 July 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Senate Inquiry today.

Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia) is Australia's major technical and educational fire safety organisation and the national industry peak body for fire safety, which provides information, services and education to the fire protection industry and the community.

FPA Australia is a not for profit association and is supported by approximately 1500 members, consisting of leading companies and organisations around Australia employing an estimated 30,000 individuals, and operating across every aspect of the fire protection, building and construction industry.

Our vision is: leading and supporting a professional industry to minimise the impact of fire on life, property and the environment, for a safer community.

The association is involved in and advocates for the continuous improvement in legislation, codes, and standards and provides guidance and education independently to pursue our vision, free of bias, coercion, favouritism and external commercial interests.

As comprehensively discussed in the FPA Australia submission to the terms of reference of this inquiry, product conformity is extremely important, however FPA Australia contends that to achieve compliant, quality building outcomes where buildings meet the National Construction Code requirements, it is paramount to have the following three pillars or elements that all come together:

1. **Conforming Products** – products that are what they claim to be, are validated and are importantly **fit for purpose**.
2. **Conforming People** – professional, educated, accredited practitioners that are **fit for action**.
3. **Enforcement** – empowered regulators, proactive and willing to act to ensure the people and products come together succinctly to achieve the necessary compliant building outcomes, and I emphasise the word compliant, that meet the goal of the National Construction Code and that is to efficiently achieve minimum standards of public safety, health, amenity and sustainability.

FPA Australia contends that no amount of codes and standards will ever replace or compensate for the need for people to be properly educated, professional in their conduct, accountable and able to deliver on these minimum building outcomes.

Improvements in the National Construction Code and Standards will always be healthy to respond to latest trends, techniques and technology advancements, however unless **products** are **fit for purpose** and **people** are **fit for action**, and importantly there are regulators willing to act and put in place the necessary administrative and building controls to ensure this occurs, we will continue to see an unacceptable level of risk for our community.

To understand the risk of not taking action, you only need to look at the recent tragic Grenfell fire incident in London, which represents the full and shocking magnitude of a breakdown in regulatory control.

Thank you.

Scott Williams

Chief Executive Officer

Fire Protection Association Australia

Compliant buildings safe for occupancy

Products

Fit for Purpose

People

Fit for Action

Regulators

Willing to enforce