



## The Hon Mark Vaile MP

Minister for Trade

Deputy Leader of the National Party of Australia

Mr Stephen Gould  
PO Box 517  
NEUTRAL BAY NSW 2089

11 AUG 2004

Dear Mr Gould

Thank you for your letter of 5 July 2004 to the Prime Minister concerning the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA). As the matters raised fall within my portfolio responsibility, your letter has been passed to me for reply.

As you note in your letter, Australia has a commitment to ISO Standards and the United States is committed to ANSI Standards. National differences in regard to standards are recognised in the AUSFTA, partly as the US, given its economic importance to the global economy, is often a standards setter, rather than a standards taker.

In this context there are several commitments contained in AUSFTA designed to reduce difficulties that may result from differing national standards. For example:

- each Party shall use relevant international standards, to the extent provided in Article 2.4 of the TBT Agreement, as a basis for its technical regulations;
- the Parties shall consult and exchange views on matters under discussion in relevant international or regional bodies that develop standards, guidelines, recommendations, or policies relevant to this Chapter; and,
- each Party shall give positive consideration to accepting as equivalent technical regulations of the other Party, even if these regulations differ from its own, provided it is satisfied that these regulations adequately fulfil the objectives of its own regulations.

Given the practical manner in which this issue is addressed through the provisions of the AUSFTA we do not see a need to establish a Free Trade Agreement e-Governance Committee.

Thank you for bringing your views to the attention of the Government.

Yours sincerely

MARK VAILE