



Australian Building Codes Board - "Open Debate An Essential Right"

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An Open Letter to Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science And Research

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SENATOR THE HON KIM CARR

**MINISTER FOR INNOVATION, INDUSTRY,
SCIENCE AND RESEARCH**

22 MAR 2010

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Federal Member for Flinders
PO Box 274
HASTINGS VIC 3915

Greg
Dear Mr Hunt

Thank you for your letter of 3 March 2010 on behalf of Mr Adrian Butler of Currumbin, concerning ionization smoke alarms in Australian Homes.

Life safety is a very important part of the Australian Building Codes Board's (ABCB) mission. The Board is aware of the concerns raised by Mr Butler and has given this matter its careful consideration.

In the light of international research regarding the use of ionisation and photoelectric smoke alarms, the ABCB considers there is insufficient scientific evidence to support the claims made by Mr Butler. As a consequence, the Board has not supported changes to Australian Standard AS 3786 (1993), which promotes the use of both ionisation and photoelectric smoke alarms.

Standards Australia is a private commercial entity, and I am unable to comment on its views. You may wish to contact Standards Australia directly for its position on this matter.

Mr Butler raised similar concerns previously through another Member of Parliament midway through last year. The position of the Board has not changed since this time.

Again, thank you for bringing Mr Butler's concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Kim Carr



Greg Hunt MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR FLINDERS



SHADOW MINISTER FOR CLIMATE ACTION, ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

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1 April 2010

Mr Adrian Butler
Co-Founder, The World Fire Safety Foundation
Suite 1, Level 4, NFPTV House
23 Ocean Grove
CURRUMBIN QLD 4223

Dear Mr Butler,

Further to representations I made to Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, concerning ionization smoke alarms in Australian homes, I have now received a response.

For your information, I enclose a copy of the Minister's response. I trust this information is helpful to you.

If I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely,

GREG HUNT MP

encl
GH:ls



12 April, 2010

Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Parliament House Office, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Re: Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) - "Open Debate An Essential Right"

Dear Minister Carr

On 22nd March, 2010 in your letter to the Hon Greg Hunt MP, Federal Member for Flinders you wrote: *"In light of international research regarding the use of ionisation and photoelectric smoke alarms, the ABCB considers there is insufficient scientific evidence to support the claims made by (the World Fire Safety Foundation). As a consequence, the Board has not supported changes to Australian Standard AS 3786 (1993), which promotes the use of both ionisation and photoelectric smoke alarms."*

Minister, we, the World Fire Safety Foundation have requested from the ABCB copies of the evidence it has relied upon in reaching its conclusion that there is *"insufficient evidence"*, but it has so far failed to provide this. Given the weight of evidence supplied to the Board contrary to its current stated position, it is reasonable to assume that the Board has counter-evidence that it has relied upon. If it does not, then it is presupposing itself as being more competent in these matters than the Technical Committee of Standards Australia FP-002 and other experts cited in the evidence provided to the Board.

Under the terms of agreement that allow for the Board's existence, transparency is paramount. By failing to provide this information, the Board is denying opportunity for rebuttal. Given that on 02 December, 2010 you authored an article titled, *'Open Debate An Essential Right'*, I request that you as Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research assist us in obtaining from the ABCB copies of the information that it has relied upon in reaching its conclusion.

Minister, please request the ABCB answer the following questions:

1. Why did the Australian Building Codes Board amend the Building Code of Australia in 2004 adopting the revised AS1670.1 - 2004, wherein PHOTOELECTRIC smoke alarms/detectors are mandated in all sleeping areas and paths of egress in classes 2 ~ 9 buildings to which the standard applies (where virtually no fire deaths have historically occurred), yet the ABCB now claim there is "insufficient evidence" to extend the same level of safety to class 1 and 2 dwellings where historically and currently the highest incidence of fire deaths occur in Australia? and
2. On what evidentiary basis did the ABCB rely to make their claim that there was "insufficient evidence" to adopt the revised Australian Standard 3786?

The Foundation believes that the ABCB's failure to adopt Standard Australia's critical correction to Australia's existing, flawed smoke alarm standard is grossly negligent and has already led to, and will continue to lead to needless loss of life. Your urgent attention to this matter is requested.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

The World Fire Safety Foundation
Karl Westwell
Co-Founder

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Is Gross Government Negligence Putting Your Families Lives at Needless Risk?

To: All Home Owners and Tenants

12 April, 2010

Australia's Flawed Smoke Alarm Standard

In February 2006 Standards Australia discovered a deadly loophole in Australia's Smoke Alarm Standard. Scientific evidence held by Australia's CSIRO, dating back to 1993, proves that the ionization *type* of smoke alarms in almost all Australian homes will not activate until *more than twice the maximum safe limit* of smoke set for photoelectric smoke alarms. The level of smoke at which ionization alarms activate has been declared to be "dangerously high" and "totally unacceptable" (see '[Smoke Alarm Recall](#)').

Standards Australia's FP-002 Committee of technical experts corrected the defective standard by [eliminating the flawed testing](#) that has allowed ionization smoke alarms to be certified as safe. However, despite mandating photoelectric smoke alarms in commercial buildings in 2004 (see page 3), the bureaucrats at the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), have without just cause or accountability, failed to adopt the corrected standard, affecting every Australian home, into the Building Code of Australia.

The action of the ABCB, in failing to adopt the corrected smoke alarm standard into the Building Code of Australia, conflicts with:

- The [CAN Report](#) - 'Recommending Selling or Installing Ionization Smoke Alarms, A Criminal Act of Negligence?',
- All [Australian and New Zealand Fire Brigades](#),
- The [Fire Protection Association of Australia](#),
- The [International Association of Fire Fighters](#),
- Indiana's Exposé: '[Deadly Delay](#)',
- Tennessee's Exposé: '[An Alarming Failure](#)',
- Virginia's Exposé: '[Alarming Smoke Detectors](#)',
- Atlanta's Exposé: '[Deadly Smoke Detectors](#)',
- The landmark [Hackert v BRK lawsuit](#), and
- The [Class Action Law Suit](#) against the world's largest ionization smoke alarm manufacturers.

America's Flawed Smoke Alarm Standard

Despite overwhelming evidence, Underwriter's Laboratories has failed to admit there is [a problem with America's flawed smoke alarm standard](#). Standards Australia's acknowledgement of flawed testing raises issues of [Scientific Misconduct](#) in relation to standards testing of ionization smoke alarms globally.

Watch the two short films on the [home page](#) at The World Fire Safety Foundation's website, examine the information in the links above, and **please** - warn everyone you know.

Thank you.

The World Fire Safety Foundation
Adrian Butler & Karl Westwell
Co-Founders

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