

Sinclair Knight Merz  
100 Christie St,  
St Leonards NSW 2065  
PO Box 194  
St Leonards NSW 1590 Australia



Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace  
Relations Committees  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

*3February 2012*

To Committee Secretary

### **Senate inquiry: Shortage of Engineers and related employment skills**

The following Terms of Reference will be address in this submission:

- (c) options to address the skill shortage for engineers and related trades, and the effectiveness and efficiency of relevant policies, both past and present
- (e) effective strategies to develop and retain engineering talent in the private and public sectors through industry training and development, at enterprise, project and whole-of sector levels

### **Overview of Sinclair Knight Merz**

Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) is a leading multi-disciplinary company with global capability in strategic consulting, engineering and project delivery. With more than 7,000 people shared across over 40 offices, we're an employee-owned organisation operating across the Asia Pacific, the Americas and EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa), serving the mining and metals, energy, power, transport infrastructure, social infrastructure, water, defence, industry and international development assistance markets.

Formed in 1964, our people come from a diverse range of disciplines including engineers, planners, architects, economists, scientists, project managers, technicians and functional staff.

### **Employment at SKM**

70% of our global business is generated in Australia, working specifically with public and private companies and government to deliver engineering design and project delivery.

Due to the shortage of skilled labour in Australia in the maritime engineering, structural engineering, mechanical engineering, project delivery, design, and port and wharf skills in

Sinclair Knight Merz Pty Limited

The SKM logo trade mark is a registered trade mark of Sinclair Knight Merz Pty Ltd.ABN 37 001 024 095

Offices across Australia, New Zealand, UK, South East Asia, Middle East, the Pacific and Americas

particular, SKM has needed to invest considerable effort in sourcing experienced engineers and project delivery personnel outside Australia. We have focused our strategic resourcing efforts in participation in international expos, referrals from our senior people and strategic partnerships with sourcing agents in Europe and the Americas. Given the engagement method for these specialist skills is via 456 visas, this approach has not always provided SKM with the opportunity to develop and retain local talent.

Annually, SKM campaigns universities to engage graduate engineers in Australia, resulting in an average hire of 100 graduates per year. The availability of suitable qualified graduates is diminishing due to demand in the market and the number of graduates undertaking civil engineering.

In order to address the short term and long term requirements, it is recommended that the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees focus on a number of initiatives to assist industry to meet the demands for engineers in the area of training and policy.

#### **Strategies for consideration**

- Provide bridging programs to create opportunities for those in trade professions wishing to undertake engineering/project management study, to transition to this under-resourced area. This can take a number of forms such as: full time study support or joint employer and government support in the form of an apprenticeship
- Provide incentives for females to undertake engineering/project management studies, for example, HECS reduction or specific female engineering scholarships
- Provision of a re-skilling grant for engineers/project managers who have taken a parental or career break to provide support to return to engineering/project management
- Incentives for employers to sponsor students through engineering and project delivery university programs eg: tax concessions
- Review of the impact of potential LAHFA changes on Australia's ability to attract highly skilled engineers to meet the demand
- Support for Australian companies wishing to import international skills, for example, tax concessions, sponsorship funding and a more streamlined and fast-track process to enable migrants to gain initial short-term visas, and subsequently permanent residency in Australia if required

Yours sincerely

**Steve Dorian**  
**General Manager People**