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AUSTRALIAN DENTAL
ASSOCIATION INC.

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 The Research Officer
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
ACT 2600

Dear Madam

Re: Evidence of Robert Noel Boyd-Boland – 23 November 2005

At the conclusion of my evidence to the Committee the Chair asked a question of me as to the ability of overseas dental specialists attaining accreditation within Australian as an equivalent dental specialist. I was unable to answer the question but indicated that I would seek the necessary information.

Accreditation of overseas dental specialists

There are significant differences in the format and content of primary dental training throughout the world, reflecting local dental healthcare patterns and priorities. In the case of specialist dental practice the difference between systems of training are even more pronounced.

Approval for specialist dental accreditation in Australia is within the province of the State and Territory Dental Boards. However, these Boards seek the advice of the Australian Dental Council. The Australian Dental Council is, you will recall, the body that undertakes the accreditation process of overseas trained dentists seeking registration within Australia.

Whilst approval for dental specialist practice in Australia is within the province of the regional Dental Board, the Dental Boards have approached the Australian Dental Council in an effort to create some uniformity in the process of accreditation of overseas trained specialist.

When an overseas trained specialist seeks dental specialist accreditation before a State or Territory Board the application is forwarded to the Australian Dental Council (ADC). The ADC forms a panel to consider the application. This panel is made up of a representative from a peak specialist body, an appropriate dental academic of the specialist category for which the applicant seeks accreditation and a Chair of that panel as appointed by the ADC. The ADC evaluates the application with a view to ensuring that the applicant has reached a level of training and skill commensurate with that required by each Board. The applicant must reach a level equivalent to that which an Australian born applicant would be required to reach.

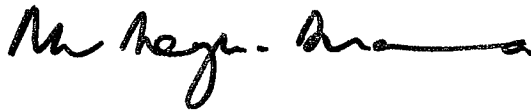
The ADC then makes a decision in relation to the application and communicates that decision by way of recommendation to the appropriate Dental Board. The recommendation could be to approve the application; reject it or reject it with advice to the applicant of the need for further training in some particular area. An appeal process exists from the ADC's decision process.

No precise statistics as to the approval rating of applicants has been obtained but, anecdotally, it is understood that a little more than half the applications lead to recommendations by the ADC for accredited specialist status to be granted by the State or Territory Board.

Please find enclosed a copy of the policy of the Australian Dental Council in relation to this issue.

Should you require any further information with regard to matters raised in this letter please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

Yours faithfully



R N Boyd-Boland
Chief Executive Officer

AUSTRALIAN DENTAL COUNCIL

Policy Document- By Resolution dated November 29, 2002

Specialist Registration

A. Australian Trained Graduate - Requirements

- (i) Registration as a dentist
- (ii) A minimum three year post-graduate specialist qualification accredited by the Australian Dental Council.

B. Overseas Trained Graduate – Requirements

- (i) Registration as a dentist in Australia
- (ii) Certified by the Australian Dental Council as having equivalence with Australian specialist qualifications.

Determination of Equivalence

- (i) An expert panel acting on behalf of the Australian Dental Council will Assess the appropriateness of a candidate's qualifications.
- (ii) The composition of the panel shall be:
 - (a) An appropriate University Dental School representative
 - (b) An appropriate nominee from the peak specialist body or the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
 - (c) A nominee of the Australian Dental Council.

The membership of this panel would be based on the need for uniformity and representation. It is preferable that the Panel be consistent in its membership and empowered to request assistance from appropriate organizations or individuals during its deliberations. The composition of the Panel suggested above is important as such a membership provides broad professional representation, impartiality and balance in the process of assessment.

An appropriate protocol will need to be devised by the Panel whereby the candidate provides details of his/her post-graduate specialist training and experience referenced for assessment. The State and Territory Dental Boards currently have systems for assessment of overseas specialist qualifications. The RACDS has evolved and operated for over 20 years a well established channel of assessments for exemption from its primary RACDS Examination of local and overseas post-graduates who hold specialist degrees acquired abroad. It is envisaged that the process of selection that will be adopted by the Panel will evolve from these various organizations' selection criteria.

The requirement for uniformity of determination of the Panel may require that the Boards and Councils of the respective organizations maintain a single member as their representative on the Panel over a period of time.

Equivalence in Education

The panel will need to determine the appropriateness of the foreign post-graduate training and educational specialist program. The appropriateness would relate to the equivalence of the foreign programme to that of the established, accredited specialist training programmes in Australia. The Panel may choose to accept specialist courses that have been accredited by other independent authorities such as the General Dental Council or the American Dental Association.

Equivalence of Standards

Once equivalence in specialist qualifications is established a foreign candidate could, by means of a submission to the Panel, exhibit equivalence in standards by way of a written, oral or clinical examination or a combination of all three.

Certification of Equivalence

Upon demonstrating equivalence in education and in standards to the Panel's satisfaction the ADC will issue a Certificate of Dental Specialist Equivalence for submission to a Registration Body.

Notes Accompanying the Policy

The Australian Dental Council has responded to requests from Australian Dental Boards to attempt to bring about consistency in the recognition process for overseas trained specialists. In the past inconsistency between jurisdictions has been exploited by way of the Mutual Recognition legislation with the result that the lowest standard required by a particular jurisdiction could become the universal standard. This policy aims to eliminate inconsistency.

In the event that an overseas trained specialist fails to gain the ADC Certificate of Dental Specialist Equivalence and elects to appeal against the recommendation of the Panel, an appeal mechanism would be set up to consider the appeal. The appeal Panel would comprise an appropriate Dental School representative who has not been a member of an ADC Panel as described in the policy, a nominee from the peak specialist body or the RACDS who has not been a member of an ADC Panel and a nominee of an appropriate Ethnic Council. A fee of \$100 would be required to accompany lodgment of the appeal. Such fee may be varied from time to time by resolution of the ADC. In the event of an appeal being upheld, the fee would be refunded.

The policy is couched in general terms so that it can be applied to all dental specialties. It is recognized that the specialty nominees on the various Panels may change from time to time to reflect change within specialist bodies. It is essential that such nominees have the status and support to speak on behalf of the specialists of the particular discipline.

Proposed Template for Recognition of Overseas Acquired Specialist Qualifications

Name and ADC reference number if applicable

Details of registration as a dentist (certified copy)

Details of Registration as a specialist (in country of specialist practice).
(Certified copy of both original language and translation)

Specialist registration applied for

Specialist qualifications including certified copy of transcript of curriculum,
including both theoretical and clinical components

Details of any supervised practice (including log books) carried out during
post-graduate specialty program. This should include amount (total hours)
and types of treatments performed.

Work history as a specialist

Nature of specialist practice (eg broad practice of specialty or practice of
sub-specialty)

Two professional references from specialist colleagues and two from your
dentists who referred patients to you

Membership of specialist societies

Research Activity (including publications)

Teaching appointments (undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD)