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Submission No. 91.c
Date Received 21-4-06

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Reference: Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing
Hearing of 27 March 2006

1. **Threshold criteria for bodies applying to be assessing authorities.(Page M21)**

a) **How does DEST monitor an assessing authority once a body has been given the right to be an assessing body? (Page M21)**

The Migration Regulations 1994 confer upon DEST the ability to approve a body as the relevant assessing authority for an occupation. They do not provide any specific advice with regard to the ongoing monitoring or regulation of these authorities. However, to ensure that assessing authorities maintain the standard of performance required by the approval process, DEST has assumed a monitoring role to be consistent with its obligations under the migration regulations.

At present, DEST monitors 28 assessing authorities with respect to the assessment functions they undertake for the purpose of skilled migration.

Monitoring is intended to:

- ensure that professional assessing authorities are continuing to deliver an efficient and effective service that supports the operation of the General Skilled Migration Program;
- protect the interests of prospective migrants; and
- ensure that the operations of the assessing authorities are not creating an unreasonable barrier to migration.

Historically, DEST has relied on a range of informal and formal mechanisms for monitoring the ongoing performance of assessing authorities. These mechanisms have included desktop audits of publicly available information, analysis of quarterly statistics provided by the assessing authorities as well as the direct resolution of individual issues as they have arisen.

In response to the professional demand for increased skills assessments and the anticipated increase in assessing authorities (DEST is currently negotiating with seven professional bodies in relation to becoming assessing authorities – see answer to question 5a below), DEST is moving to formalise the monitoring regime. The new regime will include formal assessment against the original approval criteria, a desk top audit of publicly available information including the authority's relevant website, statistical analysis, site visits to selected assessing authorities and a brief annual report by DEST on the performance of the assessing authority against the original approval criteria.

b) **Do you monitor timeliness and effectiveness?**

To meet the criteria against which they are approved to operate, assessing authorities are expected to continue to provide clients with "a fair, equitable, transparent and accessible system for assessing the specified occupation".

Accordingly, DEST expects that assessing authorities provide their clients with a customer focused service which is both timely and effective. DEST monitors the quarterly statistical data provided by assessing authorities to note trends in approval and completion rates.

c) What is the ongoing role?

In addition to its approval and monitoring roles, DEST provides assessing authorities with ongoing advice to support best practice. This includes the provision of the *Good Practice Guide for the Assessment and Recognition of Overseas Qualifications and Skills for the Purposes of Migration* as well as the conduct of an annual conference for assessing authorities to exchange information, address common issues of concern, update methodology and build relationships.

d) Have you had any complaints about assessing authorities in recent years?

DEST receives a small number of complaints about assessing authorities, normally through representations by applicants to the Minister. There have been six such representations since January 2005, complaining about negative skills assessments from four different assessing authorities.

2. What about issues with other agencies – TRA, for example? (Page M22)

a) Has TRA indicated that there is an issue with assessing authorities being slow, being extra efficient or not being efficient?

b) Do you have any communication on that basis?

DEST's Professional and International Recognition Unit – which deals with assessing authorities – has not interacted with TRA on this issue.

3. In monitoring the quality and effectiveness of assessing bodies (line of questioning commenced Page M22). Provide statistics for the reporting period on the number of assessments taking place, their nature and the pass and fail rate. (Page M23)

Statistics provided at Appendix A.

4. On page 18 of DEST submission at point No. 5 we have "Alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition of overseas qualifications". Can you tell us how the recognition of prior learning, RPL, might improve Australia's overseas skills recognition arrangements? (Page M23)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) may be defined in a number of ways. All definitions include the key notion that RPL involves the assessment of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system. RPL assesses this unrecognised learning against the requirements of a qualification, in respect of both entry requirements and outcomes to be achieved. By removing the need for duplication of learning, RPL encourages an individual to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge through structured education and training towards formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes (Australian Qualifications Framework).

Many professionals wanting to migrate to Australia may have had a considerable length of time working in their profession without having acquired a formal qualification equivalent to an Australian Degree or Diploma. Through RPL the potential migrant is allowed the opportunity to demonstrate that they have acquired a level of knowledge equivalent to that of a formal tertiary qualification. This process has the potential to allow the migrant to be job ready in a shorter period of time than if they had to acquire qualifications at a tertiary setting which are often linked to specific semester dates. This process may encourage migrants who may lack formal qualifications but have many years of work experience in their field to apply for migration thus giving Australia a wider field of skilled migrants.

Under current arrangements, the extent to which RPL will be granted to professionals wishing to migrate to Australia is a matter for individual assessing authorities to determine.

5. Have there been any new assessing authorities gazetted since July 2005? If so, for what occupations? Can you briefly describe the process and what alternative arrangements may be in place if there is no assessing authority for a profession at any given time? (Page M26)

One assessing authority, the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Inc, has been gazetted since July 2005.

All professional occupations listed on the Skilled Occupation List (SOL) have either an occupation specific assessing authority or are assessed by the Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services (VETASSESS). Should there be no national body capable of taking on the role of assessing authority, an arrangement is negotiated with VETASSESS to undertake a general skills assessment for the purpose of migration. An occupation specific assessing authority must exist before an occupation can be listed on the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL).

a) Can you later provide the committee with details of those seven assessing authorities that are in the pipeline to cover professions that may be deemed to be in high demand?

Assessing authority	Occupation
Teaching Australia	Teachers (pre-primary, primary and secondary)
TRA for Child Care Coordinators	Child Care Coordinators
Council of Pharmacy Registering Authorities Inc (COPRA) [NB COPRA is to take over from the previously approved Australian Pharmacy Examining Council (APEC)]	Pharmacist (hospital and retail)
Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)	Urban and regional planner
Audiological Society of Australia (ASA)	Audiologist
Australasian College of Physical Scientists and Engineers in Medicine (ACPSEM)	Medical scientist (specialisation Medical physicist)
Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM)	Extractive metallurgist and other mining related occupations

Once the above professional bodies are approved as occupation specific assessing authorities, it is possible that the occupation they represent may, after consultation with DEWR and DIMA, be eligible to be listed on the MODL. (Hospital and Retail Pharmacists are currently listed on the MODL)

- b) Could you get back on what the follow-up-assessment and the ongoing assessment are referring to the fifth dot point of Attachment A of DEST submission on client service?**

The fifth dot point of Attachment A is as follows:

- **Client service**
There is an easily understood, equitable and transparent process which includes review and appeal avenues offered to clients.

One of the criteria against which an assessing authority is approved is:

“The assessing authority is required to provide appropriate review/appeals processes within 3 months for applicants who receive a negative migration skills assessment result.”

The Good Practice Guide for the Assessment and Recognition of Overseas Qualifications and Skills for the Purposes of Migration that DEST provides to assessing authorities makes clear the ongoing importance of client service and appropriate review and appeal processes.

As noted in the response to 1(d) above, DEST receives a limited number of representations with respect to negative assessment results. While DEST would investigate the circumstances of each situation in preparing a response, it has (as noted in the response to question 1 above) no specific regulatory power to affect the assessing authority's appeal process.

Summary of Assessing Authority Outcomes – FY 2004-2005

Architects Accreditation Council of Australia	AACA	Architecture	270	125	395
Australian Association of Social Workers	AASW	Social Worker	164	8	172
Australian Council of Physiotherapy Regulating Authorities Ltd	ACOPRA	Physiotherapist	186	13	199
Australian Computing Society	ACS	Computing	6917	1071	7988
Australian Dental Council	ADC	Dentistry	559	336	895
Australian Institute of Management	AIM	Management	248	435	683
Australian Institute of Medical Scientists	AIMS	Medical Scientist	241	173	414
Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors	AIQS	Quantity Surveyor	139	16	155
Australian Institute of Radiography	AIR	Radiographer	66	43	109
Australian Institute of Welfare & Community Workers	AIWCW	Welfare Worker	86	21	107
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council	ANWC	Nursing	2082	47	2129
Australian & New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine	ANZSNM	Nuclear Medicine	5	1	6
Australasian Podiatry Council	APC	Podiatry	21	2	23
Australian Psychological Society	APS	Psychology	199	174	373
Australasian Veterinary Boards Council	AVBC	Veterinarian	86	24	110
Civil Aviation Safety Authority	CASA	Aviation	85	6	91
Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards	COTRB	Occupational Therapy	91	6	97
CPA Australia	CPA	Accountancy	1946	121	2067
Dieticians Association of Australia	DAA	Dietician	41	20	61
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia	ICAA	Accountancy	1381	271	1652
Engineers Australia	IEAUST	Engineer	2957	104	3061
Institute of Surveyors, Australia	ISA	Surveyor	35	18	53
National Accreditation Authority for Translators & Interpreters	NAATI	Interpreter	204	62	266
National Institute of Australia	NIA	Accountancy	1324	772	2096
AEI-NOOSR	NOOSR	Teaching	1068	225	1293
Optometry Council of Australia & New Zealand	OCANZ	Optometrist	19	7	26
State Chiropractors & Osteopaths Registration Boards	SCORBs	Chiropractors & Osteopaths	6	0	6
Speech Pathology Association of Australia	SPAA	Speech Pathology	31	1	32