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Architects Accreditation Council of Australia

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ARCHITECTS ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Inquiry into Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing

June 2005

The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia is a national body comprising members nominated by all State and Territory Architects Registration Boards. The Council was established for the consideration of matters relating to the evaluation of standards for professional recognition on a national level. This national standard also acts as a yardstick against which overseas qualifications can be assessed for acceptability throughout Australia, ensuring the consistency of academic standard required of all Australian and overseas graduates in architecture.

INTRODUCTION

This submission has been prepared by the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia in response to the Inquiry into Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing.

The submission is in four parts:

1. The first section seeks to provide an overview of the criteria and standards required for registration as an architect in Australia.
2. The second section explains how these standards are used to benchmark the assessment of overseas qualifications in architecture.
3. The third section identifies steps taken by the profession in Australia to develop Mutual Recognition Arrangements with other countries.
4. Summary Conclusion

PART 1:

REGISTRATION AS AN ARCHITECT IN AUSTRALIA

In each State and Territory of Australia it is a legal requirement that any person using the title 'architect' or offering services to the public as an 'architect' must be registered. Each jurisdiction has its own Architects Act.

The Architects legislation, administered by individual State and Territory Architects Registration Boards, establishes the minimum criteria for the legal use of the title Architect.

All Australian jurisdictions have common criteria for registration, these are:

1. a recognised **academic** qualification in architecture and
2. an approved period of **training through experience** and
3. completion of an **examination in architectural practice**.

The **academic** component required for registration is:

- an accredited qualification from an Australian school of architecture, or
- a qualification in architecture obtained overseas that is assessed as equivalent to an accredited qualification from an Australian school of architecture, or
- a pass in the AACA National Program of Assessment.

The period of **training through experience** is a requirement for registration to ensure that architects enter the profession with adequate knowledge and understanding of the practice of architecture in Australia. The minimum period of practice training is two years, one of which must be subsequent to completion of a recognised academic qualification. In the case of the overseas trained, credit may be obtained for relevant overseas experience, however at least one year's experience must be completed in Australia.

The examination in architectural practice (known as the Architectural Practice Examination) is the final step in the process leading to registration. All Boards require that both the locally trained and the overseas trained provide evidence of success in this examination when applying for registration.

State and Territory legislative requirements **do not** prevent a non-registered person, whether educated and trained in Australia or overseas, from working in the profession; restriction is on the use of the title 'architect' and the offering of services to the public as an 'architect.'

PART 2:

ASSESSMENT OF OVERSEAS QUALIFICATIONS IN ARCHITECTURE

1. Assessment of Overseas Qualifications for Migration Purposes

AACA has been gazetted by the Federal Government as the relevant authority responsible for undertaking assessments against the occupation 'Architect' for migration purposes.

AACA is a national body comprising members nominated by all State and Territory Architects Registration Boards. The Council was established for the consideration of matters relating to the evaluation of standards for professional recognition on a national level. This national standard also acts as a yardstick against which overseas qualifications can be assessed for acceptability in Australia, ensuring the consistency of academic standard required of all Australian and overseas graduates in architecture.

Those holding overseas qualifications in architecture and wishing to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration Categories are required to have their **academic qualifications in architecture** assessed as 'suitable' for the occupation of Architect. The suitability of an overseas qualification is assessed in terms of equivalency with an accredited Australian qualification in architecture – the national academic standard.

Persons wishing to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration Categories **are not** required to fulfil any of the other requirements for registration in Australia prior to arriving here.

2. Assessment of Overseas Qualifications for Registration Purposes

The assessment of overseas academic qualifications for migration purposes is a provisional assessment. For registration purposes a final assessment of academic qualifications (known as a Review of Academic Equivalence – RAE) is required. The assessment for registration purposes is a national process conducted by AACA and may be undertaken in any State or Territory capital city. It is an interview procedure where the overseas educated person must produce original degree certification and transcripts, and a portfolio of academic work. The successful outcome of a RAE is accepted by each Architects Registration Board as meeting the academic requirement for registration purposes.

Should an overseas educated person's qualifications be found deficient, they may undertake topping up study at an Australian school of architecture. In AACA's experience most persons in this category have been eligible for Federal Government assistance for this purpose.

PART 3:

MUTUAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENTS (MRAs)

The Architects Registration Boards, through AACA, have sought to establish MRAs with other countries in order to facilitate reciprocity of registration between Australia and the countries concerned. While providing Australian architects access to overseas markets, such arrangements also allow those overseas educated and trained persons migrating to Australia with the ability to seek registration immediately upon arrival. The following are examples of progress in these arrangements to date:

1. New Zealand:

AACA and the New Zealand Architects Education and Registration Board have had a reciprocity of registration agreement since 1990. This has since been overtaken by the TTMRA.

2. United States of America

AACA is currently in discussion with authorities in the United States of America to establish a MRA for registration. Stage 1 of the process has already been implemented.

3. Singapore

AACA has had discussions with the Board of Architects Singapore regarding a MRA for registration. The matter is currently awaiting finalization.

In addition to the above, Australia has been an instrumental party in establishing the APEC Architect framework. The aim of the framework is to establish an APEC Architect Register that will allow for the mobility of architects through the APEC Region. The Register is to be launched on 19 September 2005. The Australian section of the Register will be held on the AACA website. While not developed for migration purposes the APEC Architect framework provides a platform upon which other bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements may be negotiated in the future.

PART 4:

CONCLUSION

The profession of architecture is regulated in Australia; any person using the title 'architect' or offering services to the public as an 'architect', must be registered. The standards for registration are nationally consistent throughout all the States and Territories of Australia. The standards applied to the overseas educated and trained are consistent with those required of the locally educated and trained.

Persons wishing to migrate to Australia under the General Skilled Migration Categories are required to have their **academic qualifications in architecture** assessed as 'suitable' for the occupation of Architect; they **are not** required to fulfil any of the other requirements for registration in Australia prior to arriving here.

The suitability of an overseas qualification in architecture is assessed in terms of equivalency with an accredited Australian qualification in architecture – the national academic standard.

The profession of architecture in Australia is committed to continuous monitoring and evaluation of its standards and procedures to ensure that it is equally assessable to all – both local and overseas trained.