

Submission No. 71

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Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

30 June 2005

Mr Don Randall MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
R1 106
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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17 JUL 2005
BY: MLC

Dear Mr Randall

I refer to your letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Alexander Downer MP dated 11 May 2005 concerning the inquiry, by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade believes that Australian commitments under bilateral free trade agreements to recognise overseas qualifications should be taken into account by the Committee. In the case of Singapore, the Singapore Australia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) commits Australia to recognise law degrees from the National University of Singapore for admission in Australia as qualified lawyers. SAFTA also requires both parties to encourage their relevant competent bodies to enter into negotiations on the recognition of professional qualifications and registration procedures. Copies of the Free Trade Agreements can be found at: <http://www.fta.gov.au> or <http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/ftas.html> and a copy of the relevant guidelines from the Agreement is attached.

The Australia US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) provides for the establishment of a Working Group on Professional Services with a comprehensive mandate to look at mutual recognition, including of qualifications and experience, licensing procedures and other issues relating to the supply of professional services.

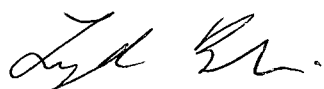
The provisions of the Thailand Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) are more limited. TAFTA establishes a qualification standard for Thai specialty chefs and permits them temporary entry into Australia for up to 4 years. TAFTA also provides for discussions between relevant professional bodies to establish a standard for recognition of Thai qualifications for traditional Thai massage therapists.

At the same time, the Department is working with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) to facilitate the effective implementation of

DIMIA's global working strategy including exploring opportunities for improving both the communication and efficiency of processes to users.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lloyd Brodrick', written in a cursive style.

Lloyd Brodrick
A/g Assistant Secretary
International Organisations Branch