

Queensland Government  
Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Inquiry into Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing

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## **Purpose of Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Queensland Government's response to the Inquiry into Overseas Skills Recognition, Upgrading and Licensing, coordinated by the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Migration.

The Queensland Government welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry and recognises and values the positive economic and social contribution that skilled migrants have made and will continue to make.

The Queensland Government's skilled migration agenda aims to ensure that:

- economic growth is fostered and developed;
- export capacity is strengthened;
- increased investment is encouraged;
- priority industries are supported;
- efforts are made to address skill shortages;
- families of skilled migrants are supported; and
- regional growth is supported.

The following submission sets out issues identified by the Queensland Government as relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference, for consideration by the Committee. Supporting information on current processes for overseas skills recognition and associated issues is included in the Appendix.

## Response to Terms of Reference

### *Term of Reference One*

Investigate and report on current arrangements for overseas skills recognition and associated issues of licensing and registration for:

- i. Skills stream migrants who obtain assessment prior to migrating;
- ii. Families of skill stream migrants, family stream migrants and humanitarian entrants who seek assessment/registration/upgrading after arrival;
- iii. Temporary residents who need skills assessment/recognition; and
- iv. Australian citizens returning after significant time overseas, with overseas qualifications.

### Issues for consideration by the Committee

#### Consistency

- There is a clear need for strategic and simplified arrangements for recognising skills and qualifications acquired overseas. There are inconsistencies in current arrangements for overseas skills recognition and associated issues of licensing and registration (refer Appendix 1).
- Despite the implementation of a national training framework, there is a lack of consistency and mutual recognition of trade qualifications across Australian states and territories (refer Appendix 1). A more uniform and comprehensive approach to vocational education and training is required at a national level<sup>1</sup>.

#### Provision of information

- The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) needs to place enhanced emphasis on clearly advising potential migrants about additional registration and licensing requirements. These may include the need to: undertake study, training or accreditation; gain practical experience; and undertake examinations or interviews before being granted registration or being allowed to practice in the nominated occupation (refer Appendix 2).

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<sup>1</sup> In June 2005, the Queensland Government released the discussion paper *Skills for Jobs and Growth* which supports, inter alia, a more nationally consistent approach for recognition of prior learning and upgrading skills of existing tradespeople.

### The Health Sector

- While there is a need to recruit a significant number of the health workforce from the international labour market, processes of regulation and recognition must be directed at ensuring that overseas trained health professionals meet the health care standards of Australia and health care needs of Australians (refer Appendix 3).
- The findings and recommendations of both the Bundaberg Commission of Inquiry and the Queensland Health Systems Review will have substantial implications for the standards, regulation and staffing arrangements of this State and will significantly influence future Queensland Government health workforce policies and regulatory arrangements (Terms of Reference for the Inquiry and the Review are included at Appendix 4 and 5 respectively).

### Responsiveness

- Processes established for overseas skills recognition need to be responsive to the needs of business, industry and the community (refer Appendix 6)
- Current and projected skills shortages in metropolitan, regional and rural areas should be a priority consideration in relation to the development of responsive migration programs (refer Appendix 6).

### ***Term of Reference Two***

**Consider how Australia's arrangements compare with those of other major immigration countries.**

#### Issues for consideration by the Committee

##### Mutual Recognition

Some professions and occupations have established reciprocal arrangements with other countries. The recognition process for overseas qualifications that are covered by Accords and professional registration or similar agreements is generally more streamlined (Appendix 7). The Committee may wish to consider the benefits of expanding such nationally and internationally consistent arrangements.

### ***Term of Reference Three***

**Identify areas where Australia's procedures can be improved including in terms of:**

- Communication of processes to users;**
- Efficiency of processes and elimination of barriers;**

- iii. **Early identification and response to persons needing skills upgrading (e.g. bridging courses);**
- iv. **Awareness and acceptance of recognised overseas qualifications by Australian employers;**
- v. **Achieving greater consistency in recognition of qualifications for occupational licensing by state and territory regulators; and**
- vi. **Alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition of overseas qualifications.**

#### Issues for consideration by the Committee

##### Information and Communication

- At the national policy level, improved communication strategies to inform stakeholders of significant policy changes and directions generated by Commonwealth departments are required (refer Appendix 8).
- The establishment, by the Commonwealth, of an online information portal to provide a central information point for offshore and onshore clients in relation to recognition and licensing in Australia for skills and qualifications gained overseas will be beneficial. However, in developing the national web portal it is important that the Commonwealth recognises the value of face to face communication with migrants and refugees, especially those who come from source countries that have limited access to the internet (refer Appendix 8).

##### Assessment Processes

- Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) does not assess against national training packages and does not align with subsequent occupational outcomes (refer Appendix 8).
- The Queensland Government has been advised that TRA will close its Queensland office in July 2005. The Commonwealth will replace face-to-face assistance for trade skilled migrants with a telephone service from the centralised Melbourne service. This may create barriers for applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds who have found it beneficial to undergo personal interviews instead of telephone interviews (refer Appendix 8).

## **Appendix**

## ***Appendix 1 - Information on current arrangements for overseas skills recognition and associated issues of licensing and registration***

### **i. Skills Stream migrants who obtain assessment prior to migrating**

*Assessment for holders of overseas technical and tertiary qualifications are carried out by:*

- The Department of Employment and Training's (DET) overseas qualifications unit, Skills Recognition. An academic comparability of overseas qualifications can be used for general employment purposes. Assessments are free of charge and use guidelines prepared by the Australian Education International arm of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR).
- Qualified migrants seeking employment in a regulated profession are referred to the appropriate state professional assessment licensing or registration body. Some mutual recognition and precedence cases are accepted for licensing in some registrable professions.
- Skilled migrants can also be referred to registered training providers for recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessment. However, this is very costly for some occupations.

#### *Overseas qualified and/or skilled tradespeople in Queensland*

- Trade skilled migrants who require a license to operate in their trade must undertake a trade recognition process. Most tradespeople are required to hold an Australian trade qualification for industrial awards, training and quality assurance requirements. However, there are some employers who accept overseas trade qualifications e.g. food industry trades, some construction.
- Trade recognition processes in Queensland are conducted by the following providers:
  - 1) the Commonwealth office of Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) in electrical, engineering and metal trades under the *Tradesmen's Rights and Regulation Act 1946 (TRR Act)*. Successful trade recognition applicants receive the Australian Recognised Trade Certificate (ARTC). This is mutually recognised in all other states and territories and accepted by licensing authorities; or
  - 2) the Department's (DET) Skills Recognition unit under Section 182 of the *Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act*



2000. Successful trade recognition applicants receive a "Certificate of Recognition". This process is mutually recognised in all other states and territories and accepted by licensing authorities; or

- 3) registered training organisations (RTOs) through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) pathway. The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate III is accepted by some industries and licensing bodies including the Building Services Authority and Motor Transport. The Department funds selected RTOs to deliver a subsidised recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessment and training program for skilled workers in skill shortage trades.

#### *Trade Licensing arrangements and issues*

- Licensing bodies for the electrical, building and plumbing industries accept only Australian qualifications or Australian trade certificates.
- Under the *Electrical Safety Act 2002*, licences can be issued to persons, including skilled migrants, who meet the relevant eligibility requirements for a particular class of electrical work. For skilled migrants, one of the ways of meeting the eligibility requirements for a number of licence classes includes holding the Australian Recognised Trade Certificate (ARTC).
- The Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement (TTMRA) operates in some professional registration but not in trade licensing areas. The Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition of New Zealand electrical workers is an exception to this. New Zealand electricians who hold a "Practising Licence for Registered Electrician" receive automatic reciprocation with a Queensland electrical mechanic licence.
- Persons who hold an interstate or New Zealand electrical licence which is equivalent to a Queensland licence as listed in the *Electrical Safety Regulation 2002*, can work in Queensland within the scope of that licence. These people can also gain an equivalent Queensland licence.
- TRA does not assess equivalence for all categories of Queensland electrical work licence, and only provides a tradesman's certificate where an overseas qualification aligns fully with a local licence category. Therefore some applicants who may, for example, have a part qualification or whose work experience and qualification is in an area for which equivalence is not assessed will not gain any recognition. TRA do not assess for equivalence with a Queensland linesperson licence.

- The only mechanism for these persons to gain an electrical work licence and have an advantage from their previous qualification or experience is to enter an apprenticeship or traineeship and then seek a reduction of the term of the apprenticeship or traineeship by applying for recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- Other trade skilled migrants must serve time in a supervised practice to meet Queensland licensing or registration requirements. This poses barriers to employment for this client group, especially in the trade occupations for the skilled independent and business migrants.

ii. Families of skill stream migrants, family stream migrants and humanitarian entrants who seek assessment/registration/upgrading after arrival

Dependents or family members of skilled migrants are eligible for all of the Department's services that are available to the principle migrant. This includes entry to state funded training and employment programs and apprenticeships and traineeships.

iii. Temporary residents who need skills assessment / recognition

Temporary residents from the following visa categories are eligible to access the same services provided to permanent residents:

- visa subclass 820 and 309
- (Provisional) visa subclass 457
- Temporary Protection Visa
- Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) visa.

Difficulties are experienced when the holders of these visas or their dependents enter apprenticeships and traineeships as they currently do not attract Commonwealth subsidies. Employers are reluctant to employ an apprentice or trainee who does not attract the subsidies.

iv. Australian citizens returning after significant time overseas, with overseas qualifications

Australian citizens returning after significant time overseas, with overseas qualifications, are provided with all opportunities available to residents.

## ***Appendix 2 - Information on Business and Skilled Migration Programs***

Since the introduction of the Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) visa, a number of concerns about skills recognition, upgrading and licensing have been noted by the Department of State Development and Innovation's Business Migration Unit.

It has been suggested that complications exist at state and national levels because of the great variation in recognition processes across occupations. This variation in processes in general, and the complexity of processes in some specific occupations, generates the perception that several impediments exist in the registration and/or licensing of skilled migrants under several visa categories.

Some problematic issues that have arisen include:

- Some assessing authorities provide a positive skill assessment that indicates an applicant is suitable for migration. However, upon arrival further assessment or licensing is required. Other assessing authorities do not provide a positive skill assessment until the applicant can meet registration requirements. This requires the applicant to initially seek entry under an alternate visa in order to achieve the practical and theory requirements.
- In cases where a migrant is required to undertake additional training or experience, it may be necessary to reside in a non-regional area where training/experience can be gained. This has the potential to place the applicant in contravention of regional visa conditions (e.g. SIR visa).
- Skilled migrants may have to work at a lower skilled level in their field or under supervision. This may have the impact of reducing the employment opportunities available to the migrant. They may also have to work in a different field to the one in which they are qualified. For migrants on SIR (provisional) visas, this could represent a problem when they approach the State for permanent residency sponsorships. This is because of the fact that the State provided SIR visa sponsorships because their skilled occupations were in demand in nominated regions, but since they were not able to work in these occupations, the State might refuse to sponsor them for permanent residency.
- Information on requirements (assessment, education bridging, registration and licensing) can in some cases be very difficult for applicants to locate.
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) may offer the required training only once a year and in a limited number of locations. Therefore a migrant may have to wait up to 12 months before receiving training.
- Examinations necessary to achieve registrations/licensing may be held only one or two times per year and in a limited number of locations.

- In some occupations there is a separate assessing and registering authority, other occupations have a single authority responsible for both assessment and registration.

It is recognised that some concerns may be specifically relevant to Queensland, but many are not. There are varying perceived barriers for migrants from occupation to occupation and some are linked to Commonwealth agency processes.

In some occupations and professions, there is a perceived culture of 'exclusion' and 'limitation' of access. While migrants satisfy the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) requirements and are allowed to migrate, they find it very difficult to be accepted by their industry bodies and to get employment in their occupations. In addition, often, at the time the occupations in demand are published by DIMIA, the peak industry demand has already started to ebb, which adds to the difficulties in finding employment.

Some specific examples of where arrangements for skills recognition may cause concerns for migrants at an occupational level include, for example:

- Architect – migrant must have 12 months work experience in an Australian architect's office.
- Physiotherapist – migrant must pass an examination, offered in March and December each year. The migrant must also undertake practical experience for up to three months.
- Dentist – migrant must pass a written and a clinical examination. Clinical examination must be conducted in Australia. The examinations are offered two times per year.
- Nuclear Medicine Technologist – migrant must pass a written examination, offered in Australia only. The migrant must complete 12 months of supervised practise before registration granted.
- Pharmacist – migrant must complete a period of practical experience in Australia, then pass an examination. The examination is offered two times per year in Australia only.
- Veterinarian – migrant must pass written and clinical examination. The examination is offered two times per year in Australia only.
- Chiropractor – migrant must pass practical examination, to be completed in Australia, before positive assessment is granted. The examination is not held in Queensland.
- Solicitor/Barrister – migrant must be admitted as legal practitioner before being granted positive assessment. Not possible for SIR visa applicant to successfully apply without having previously achieved Australian academic qualifications and practical experience necessary to be admitted.
- Electrician – may gain positive assessment, but cannot be licensed unless permanent resident or citizen.

### **Appendix 3 - The Health Sector**

Queensland Health is currently experiencing skill shortages in a number of disciplines, specialties and localities across the organisation. Such problems need to be understood in the context of current and emerging issues for health systems, more generally, and for the health workforce, in particular. Many of the contributing factors are identified in recent health workforce publications, including the *National Health Workforce Strategic Framework* developed by the Australian Health Ministers' Conference in April 2004.

At a societal level, the ageing population, the 'tightening' national labour pool and an increasingly global and mobile workforce will have a major effect over the next 10-20 years. Such factors as the ageing population potentially have a two-fold influence. On the one hand, the general workforce pool is reduced as the intake of a new generation of recruits does not keep pace with the rate of retirement or possible reduced health of the older workforce. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of a significant increase in demand for services associated with the predicted utilisation by the ageing community of a higher proportion of health services in the final years of life, also associated with the increasing prevalence of chronic disease.

Health care as a labour intensive industry has been markedly affected by changes over recent years associated with globalisation. There is a significant demand and competition for skilled health professionals in the global market place.

Currently, there are a number of target health professions that Queensland Health needs to import. These include doctors, nurses, dentists, allied health such as physiotherapists, and medical radiation technologists, as well as some trade staff such as electricians. While these target groups may vary, for the foreseeable future, Australia will need to continue to recruit a percentage of its health workforce within this highly competitive environment. Local workforce strategies, such as the increase of undergraduate places in the range of health fields, the expansion of new roles such as nurse practitioners or the adoption of new ways of working, will not be sufficient to address ongoing workforce shortages.

At the same time, the skills of Australian trained graduates are highly recognised and marketable. It is very likely that such nations as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada will continue to have a significant advantage in their ability to attract and import skilled health professionals from countries like Australia. The health professionals being imported by these larger nations will include Australian nationals trained in this country, overseas trained professionals who have taken up residency in Australia, and overseas students trained in Australia.

Further strategies need to be developed to positively and ethically recruit a percentage of the health workforce from the international labour market as well as to encourage Australian trained graduates to remain in Australia.

Effective regulation of health professionals is necessary to protect the public interest. The processes of regulation and recognition must be directed at ensuring that overseas trained health professionals meet the health care standards of Australia and health care needs of Australians. There is an urgent need for a review of the processes for recognising the qualifications and competence of international graduates for registration and employment purposes. These processes should consider language assessments (IELTS), communication skills, and awareness of cultural, gender and other sensitive issues.

There is an imperative that any changes to the regulatory system facilitate the 'flow' of the health workforce internationally and allow Australia to ethically and effectively compete in the international labour market. This will require continued emphasis on the development of a nationally consistent approach to health workforce registration across all discipline areas. It is important that local remedies devised to address problems identified in any one jurisdiction are strongly aligned with this imperative. National consistency, supported by effective communication links, is also necessary to facilitate the flow of international health professionals on working holidays with temporary short stay visas.

Following appropriate recognition and verification of qualifications, the health industry also needs to address "area of need" issues. The provision of health care services to a highly decentralised population, like that of Queensland, has many challenges. These include the broader issues of providing appropriate levels of support to both international and Australian health professionals in areas of significant skill shortages (such as rural and remote areas).

As the Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry is investigating the arrangements between the Federal and State Governments for the allocation of overseas-trained doctors to provide clinical services, with particular reference to the declaration of 'areas of need' and 'districts of workforce shortages', the findings and recommendations made in relation to these matters will have a significant impact on "area of need" issues for medical officers. The terms of reference for the Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry are attached, following (Appendix 4).

Over recent years Queensland Health has given serious consideration to health workforce issues, subsequently making appropriate policy changes and implementing a range of initiatives in relation to its workforce, including a number concerned with the recruitment and supervision of overseas trained health professionals. The organisation will continue to take a strategic approach across the state to these matters and will work productively with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions in implementing the *National Health*

*Workforce Action Plan* (July, 2004). Future developments in this regard will need to be cognisant of legislative and policy imperatives arising from both the Bundaberg Commission of Inquiry and the Queensland Health Systems Review which are currently taking place. The terms of reference for the Queensland Health Systems Review are attached, following (Appendix 5).

More specifically, the findings and recommendations of the Bundaberg Commission of Inquiry and the Queensland Health Systems Review will have a significant impact on the workforce standards, regulation and staffing arrangements of the health workforce of this state. The Bundaberg Commission of Inquiry is investigating matters specifically pertaining to the recruitment, employment, supervision and maintenance of the standards of professional practice of medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained practitioners). The Queensland Health Systems Review is performing a review of Queensland Health's administrative and workforce management systems with a focus on improving health outcomes for Queenslanders. As a result, the findings and recommendations of the Inquiry and of the Review will have significant influence on future Queensland Government health workforce policies and regulatory arrangements.

## **Appendix 4 - Bundaberg Commission of Inquiry Terms of Reference**

Under the provisions of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*, Her Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council, hereby appoints Mr ANTHONY JOHN HUNTER MORRIS QC to make full and careful inquiry with respect to the following matters –

- (1) The role and conduct of the Medical Board of Queensland in relation to the assessment, registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners, with particular reference to Dr Jayant Patel or other overseas-trained medical practitioners.
- (2) The circumstances of:
  - a. the employment of Dr Patel by Queensland Health; and
  - b. the appointment of Dr Patel to the Bundaberg Base Hospital.
- (3) Any substantive allegations, complaints or concerns relating to the clinical practice and procedures conducted by Dr Patel or other medical practitioners at the Bundaberg Base Hospital.
- (4) The appropriateness, adequacy and timeliness of action taken to deal with any of the allegations, complaints or concerns referred to in (3) above, both:
  - a. within the Bundaberg Base Hospital; and
  - b. outside the Bundaberg Base Hospital.
- (5) In relation to (1) to (4) above, whether there is sufficient evidence to justify:
  - a. referral of any matter to the Commissioner of the Police Service for investigation or prosecution; or
  - b. referral of any matter to the Crime and Misconduct Commission for investigation or further action; or
  - c. the bringing of disciplinary or other proceedings or the taking of other action against or in respect of Dr Patel or any other person.
- (6) The arrangements between the Federal and State Governments for the allocation of overseas-trained doctors to provide clinical services, with particular reference to the declaration of 'areas of need' and 'districts of workforce shortages'.

AND, as a result of any findings in respect of the above matters, to make recommendations in relation to:

- (1) Appropriate improvements to the functions, operations, practices and procedures of the Medical Board of Queensland, in particular in regard to the assessment, registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners.



- (2) Any necessary changes to the Queensland Health practices and procedures for:
  - a. the recruitment and employment of medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners);
  - b. the appointment of medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners) to regional and remote hospitals; and
  - c. the supervision of, and maintenance of the standards of professional practice of, medical practitioners, with particular reference to:
    - (i) overseas-trained medical practitioners; and
    - (ii) medical practitioners (particularly overseas-trained medical practitioners) appointed to regional and remote hospitals.
  
- (3) Mechanisms for receiving, processing, investigating and resolving complaints about clinical practice and procedures at Queensland Health hospitals, particularly where such services result in adverse outcomes, both:
  - a. within the hospital concerned; and
  - b. within Queensland Health generally; and
  - c. through other organs and instrumentalities of the Queensland Government, including the State Coroner, the Health Rights Commission, the Medical Board of Queensland, the Queensland Police Service, and the Crime and Misconduct Commission; and
  - d. otherwise.
  
- (4) Having regard to any unacceptable situations or incidents revealed in evidence, whether at the Bundaberg Base Hospital or at other Queensland Health hospitals, any systems of accountability necessary or appropriate to prevent the recurrence of such situations or incidents.
  
- (5) In reference to (6) above, measures which could assist in ensuring the availability of medical practitioners to provide clinical services across the State.
  
- (6) Any other action which should be taken properly to respond to the findings of the inquiry.

AND directs that, in conducting such inquiry:

- (1) without limiting in any manner the generality of the above, the Commissioner may have regard to and take account of the functions of:
  - a. the State Coroner;
  - b. the Health Rights Commission;
  - c. the Medical Board of Queensland;
  - d. the Queensland Police Service
  - e. the Crime and Misconduct Commission; and
  - f. any Queensland Health investigation under s.55 of the *Health Services Act 1991*.

- (2) the Commissioner shall liaise and co-operate with the parallel Queensland Health Systems Review, and may refer to such Review any matter which, in the opinion of the Commission:
- a. has implications for the broader public health system; or
  - b. can more conveniently or effectively be considered and dealt with by such Review.

AND directs that the Commission make full and faithful report and recommendations concerning the aforesaid subject matter of inquiry and transmit the same to the Honourable the Premier and Minister for Trade by 30 September 2005.

#### **Applicable Act**

- (3) The provisions of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950* shall be applicable for the purposes of this inquiry except for section 19C - Authority to use listening devices.

#### **Deputy Commissioners**

- (4) Under section 27 of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*, Her Excellency the Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council approves the appointment Sir Llewellyn Edwards AC and Miss Margaret Vider as Deputies to the abovementioned Commission.

#### **Conduct of Inquiry**

- (5) The Commissioner may hold hearings in such manner and in such locations as may be necessary and convenient. The Commissioner may:
- a. hold hearings constituted by the Commissioner, whether sitting alone or with one or both of his Deputies; or
  - b. authorise his Deputies or either of them to hold hearings or exercise powers pursuant to section 28 of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950*.

#### **Ministerial Directions**

- (6) The Honourable the Premier and Minister for Trade is to give the necessary direction herein accordingly.

#### **ENDNOTES**

1. Made by the Governor in Council on 26 April 2005.
2. Published in an Extraordinary Gazette on 26 April 2005.
3. Not required to be laid before the Legislative Assembly.
4. The administering agency is the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

## ***Appendix 5 - Queensland Health Systems Review Terms of Reference***

### **Objective:**

To undertake a review of the performance of Queensland Health's administrative and workforce management systems with a focus on improving health outcomes for Queenslanders.

### **To specifically review:**

1. Existing administrative systems and recommend improvements to support health service delivery, focusing on:
  - District and corporate organizational structures and layers of decision making
  - Corporate planning and budgeting systems
  - Cost effectiveness of services compared to relevant jurisdictions
  - Effectiveness of performance reporting and monitoring systems
  - Organisation and delivery of clinical support services
  - Risk management systems
  - Quality and safety systems and
  - Clinical audit and governance systems
  
2. Clinical workforce management systems to deliver high quality health services, with a particular focus on:
  - Recruitment
  - Retention
  - Training
  - Clinical leadership and
  - Measures to assist in improving the availability of clinicians
  
3. Performance management systems including as they relate to:
  - Asset management and capital works planning and delivery
  - Information management
  - Monitoring health system outcomes

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## **Appendix 6 - Business, industry and community interests**

### Tourism

The Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development has identified several specific concerns in relation to skills recognition for occupations within the tourism sector. Queensland in particular has a significant shortage of Japanese speaking tour guides. These tour guides are an essential part of the tourism industry in areas where tourism is a significant contributor to the Queensland economy such as the Gold Coast and Far North Queensland.

In the absence of licensing and registration requirements for these skilled migrants and no fully representational organisation for tour guides, alternative assessment processes will need to be provided to facilitate their entry through the Skilled Stream program. Efforts are currently underway regarding the development of an industry wide labour agreement in Queensland to enable employers to recruit specified numbers of overseas workers in response to identified labour shortages. However, the opportunity for migrant staff to be recruited through the Skilled Stream program offers the tourism industry flexibility in addressing the skilled labour shortage.

### Veterinarians

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) administers the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936* through the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Qld. Through this function and other interactions with veterinarians across the state, DPI&F is aware of a shortage of large animal vets in rural areas and the difficulties rural veterinary practices have in attracting and retaining veterinarians as employees or business partners. This issue is currently being investigated by the Commonwealth through the "Frawley Enquiry" on the shortage and distribution of veterinarians in rural Australia. All Australian Veterinary Boards are playing an active part in this review.

The skills recognition process for overseas veterinarians wishing to migrate to Australia is administered by the national body of the state and territory and NZ veterinary boards, namely the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) Inc based in Melbourne. The AVBC Inc is not a statutory authority and it has no legislative powers but it has been assigned the task of skills migration by the Commonwealth Government. Funding is from a levy imposed on the individual veterinary boards.

Overseas veterinarians can be processed through skills migration from offshore. If they have qualifications that make them eligible for registration as a veterinarian in Australia without further examination, they are required to gain registration in at least one Australian registering jurisdiction as part of the skills migration process. Registration as a veterinarian can also be achieved by offshore application. There is no requirement in Queensland for the person to be seen personally.

Eligibility for registration is determined from a uniform list of accredited qualifications deemed acceptable by all registration boards in Australasia. Persons not possessing such qualifications are assessed by AVBC Inc for eligibility to sit the National Veterinary Examination of Australia.

The AVBC Inc and all Australian and NZ Boards have websites that can be accessed by overseas veterinarians. Processes are made efficient by use of email and facsimile in the skills migration and registration processes. There are no inconsistencies between the state and territory registration boards as far as eligible qualifications are concerned and all boards are committed to the Mutual Recognition Agreement between the states/territories.

Employers of veterinarians in Queensland are required to confirm that a prospective employee from overseas has a registrable qualification. The profession at large is very accepting to the employment of overseas veterinarians.

Skills upgrading can be achieved offshore by structured or unstructured post graduate learning. The AVBC makes sample national examination papers available on its website and provides NVE candidates with a list of study reference material.

There is a lack of bridging courses available in Australia for overseas qualified veterinarians who are residing in Australia and who wish to undertake some form of structured training. The Australian veterinary schools do not provide courses of this nature.

#### Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee

The Multicultural Women's Advisory Committee (MWAC) is an independent committee that provides expert advice to the Honourable Minister for Women, on improving the lives, wellbeing and opportunities of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. On 1 June 2005 the Multicultural Women's Summit was held, providing women from diverse ethnic backgrounds of all ages with an opportunity to identify issues, propose solutions and actions, and discuss community leadership and advocacy skills.

Participants at the Summit identified the following challenges for women from migrant and refugee communities:

- identifying gaps in the information provided to the multicultural community;
- giving support to new and emerging communities;
- creating more inclusive mechanisms for community engagement; and
- improving sensitivity and responsiveness of government agencies.

## **Appendix 7- Local and international arrangements**

Some professions and occupations have established reciprocal arrangements with other countries. For example, overseas apprenticeships currently assessed by the Building Services Authority as being at least equivalent to Queensland technical requirements include:

<b>Overseas Qualification</b>	<b>BSA Equivalent Licence</b>
Flat glass (New Zealand)	Glass, Glazing and Aluminum
Carpentry and Joinery (New Zealand)	1. Carpentry 2. Joinery
Joinery (New Zealand)	Joinery
Painting and Decorating (UK)	Painting and Decorating
Painting and Decorating (New Zealand)	Painting and Decorating
Carpentry (New Zealand)	Carpentry

The recognition of Australian qualifications overseas that are covered by Accords and professional registration or similar agreements have better acceptance and recognition.

Anecdotal evidence demonstrates that even in Commonwealth countries Australian qualifications are not always accepted on face value. Applicants holding Australian apprenticeship completions have been required to undertake further assessment processes before employment (such as in Canada and the United States).

## ***Appendix 8 - Steps for enhanced processes***

### **i. Communication of processes to users**

Effective communication and information sharing is required among skills recognition authorities, professional bodies, accreditation units and licensing authorities within all jurisdictions about the processes for recognition of skills and qualifications, including appeal mechanisms. Clear communication of policy and policy directions is needed at a national level.

There is great variety in settlement, occupational and licensing information provided for skilled migrants. The state and territory Overseas Qualifications Units have identified, at the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (SCIMA), the need for a national portal providing a central point for information for offshore and onshore clients.

Proponents of the proposed national web portal for the provision of information and pathways and services for recognition and licensing in Australia for skills and qualifications gained overseas should also consider the face to face information communication needs of migrants and refugees, especially those who come from source countries that have limited access to the internet.

Client reports identify a lack of feedback provided to unsuccessful trade migration applicants processed by Trades Recognition Australia. Both locally assessed tradespeople and overseas entrants have reported a lack of information about the reasons for their negative outcomes and a perceived "secrecy" from this organisation. This has been substantiated by the Migration Agents assisting this client group.

### **ii. Efficiency of processes and eliminations of barriers**

Employers indicate that barriers from licensing authorities impact on the migrant's job-readiness, employment and business delivery. Trade classification of trade skilled migrants during the pre-migration process is based on ASCO descriptors which do not align with Australian trade qualifications based on the national training framework. This inconsistency impacts on the tradesperson's recognition and licensing. The content of the trade work overseas may be different or the title given to the trade skilled migrant too broad to match Australian trade classifications or licensing requirements

The Queensland Government has been advised that TRA will close its Queensland office in July 2005. The Brisbane TRA office has been

assisting trade skilled migrants with assessments and recognition in the electrical and metals trades for some time. The Commonwealth have replaced their face-to-face assistance for trade skilled migrants with a telephone service from the centralised Melbourne service. This may create barriers for applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds who have found it beneficial to undergo personal interviews instead of telephone interviews.

iii. Early identification and response to persons needing skills upgrading (e.g. bridging courses)

Access to bridging course or other training programs relies on the migrant identifying the appropriate professional body responsible for registration or licensing and the length of the recognition process. Some skilled migrants arrive in Australia not aware that there are more processes to undergo before they are able to work or practice their profession. Bridging courses are not currently available in trades.

iv. Awareness and acceptance of recognised overseas qualifications by Australian employers

Acceptance of overseas-gained skills and qualifications varies greatly across trades and professions and across different regions.

v. Achieving greater consistency in recognition of qualifications for occupational licensing by state and territory regulators

Trade licensing bodies need a nationally consistent approach or process for the recognition of overseas qualified tradespeople. Currently, overseas qualified tradespeople may be eligible for licensing in one state but not others.

TRA has provided a nationally consistent assessment and recognition pathway which is accepted by all stakeholders as valid and reliable. However, it does not assess against national training packages and does not align with these occupational outcomes. TRA needs to review 1946 legislation that restricts the scope of trade assessment processes and develop a more flexible occupational assessment tool.

vi. Alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition of overseas qualifications

The Queensland Government currently operates successful work experience programs for overseas qualified people in a range of non trade occupations. Local work experience and the establishment of local networks has proven to be a positive step towards employment and is less costly alternative to unemployment programs.