

**SUBMISSION BY AUSTRALIAN PHARMACY EXAMINING COUNCIL INC
ON
REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S SKILLED LABOUR MIGRATION AND TEMPORARY
ENTRY PROGRAM**

Background Information

As in most countries, the practise of a profession in Australia requires evidence of an appropriate level of education and experience. Pharmacy education differs around the world both in quality and training and pharmacy delivery varies enormously in different countries. The practise of pharmacy in Australia in health care is unique and practising pharmacists in Australia must be competent at the level the Australian community expects.

The Australian Pharmacy Examining Council Inc (APEC) was established to assist overseas trained pharmacists to obtain registration in Australia and thus enable them to practise their profession in Australia. APEC comprises members from each Australian state and territory registering authority and in conjunction with the registering authorities has devised an examination procedure to assess the competence of overseas trained pharmacists. This examination process consists of an English test, a Stage I Examination (multiple choice), a period of supervised practice and a Stage II Examination (clinical).

The APEC examination process tests the competency of the applicant to practise contemporary pharmacy in Australia and there are very few applicants who are not eligible to enter the APEC examination process. Once eligible the applicant must demonstrate their theoretical and clinical knowledge of pharmacy and be tested at the level of an Australian pharmacist. This is seen to be a fair and equitable process and therefore APEC has very few issues of non-recognition of overseas trained pharmacists.

Under reciprocal arrangements with Ireland, the United Kingdom and New Zealand pharmacists who trained in those countries and are registered to practise in those countries are not required to complete the APEC examination process, but are required to undertake a period of supervised practice in Australia (usually 4 weeks) and to be familiar with Australian drug laws.

In July 1999 APEC was listed as the skills assessing authority for hospital and retail pharmacists under the Migration Act and pharmacy is currently a profession which is listed on the Migration Occupation in Demand List (MODL). However, given the increasing numbers of Australian pharmacy graduates this shortage may be reduced somewhat in Australia in the future.

Specific points for comment

- *International competition for skilled labour*

There is currently a world-wide shortage of pharmacists and labour markets forecast that this will continue for some time, therefore there is international competition for pharmacists.

- *Attraction to Australia for skilled migrants*

APEC has seen a significant increase in numbers of applicants from overseas trained pharmacists in the last few years and this may be due to a combination of Australia being seen as an attractive country to migrate to and the occupation of pharmacy being on the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL).

- *Competitiveness of migration program*

APEC is unable to comment though it should be noted that the majority of the countries mentioned in your covering letter have similar requirements for recognition as Australia does.

- *Policy and procedural changes to improve competitiveness*

APEC is unable to comment

- *Settlement patterns of new settlers*

APEC's role is to ascertain the competency of overseas trained pharmacists to practise pharmacy in Australia and once that has been determined the applicant then proceeds to the registering authority for registration. APEC has none, or very little contact after that point and therefore cannot comment on the settlement patterns of new settlers. Suffice to say that most new settlers gravitate to the cities initially as these offer more chances of finding placements for the supervised practice component of the examination process.

Since 1981 around 500 overseas trained pharmacists have completed the APEC process and have been registered to practise pharmacy in Australia and many are in full time work in community, hospital or industry practice.