



## **Architects Board of the Australian Capital Territory**

Architect Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Commissioner

In response to the publication by the productivity Commission on 12 May 2000 of the Draft Report of the productivity Commission entitled *Review of legislation Regulating the Architectural Profession*, a special meeting of the Architects Board of the ACT was convened.

Members of the Board strongly support the retention of statutory regulation of architects, preferably uniform between all States and Territories. Such legislation should incorporate promotion of accountability of architects' boards, competition among architects and between architects and non-architects, and establishment of a system of registration based on uniform standards and mutual recognition between jurisdictions.

We agree with the response by AACA to the Draft Report.

The following information is in response to matters raised in several of the requests for further information (RFIs) on page xxxvii of the Draft Report.

### RFI 1

Architects are responsible for the lesser portion of the residential market, but what they do is in the vanguard of design for this sector from which other building designers derive many of their more substantial ideas and with which other residential buildings are compared. In other sectors, where architects provide a smaller proportion of services, the same consideration applies to an even greater degree.

The significance of this is threefold.

First, other designers take their lead from architects. Unequivocally, the work produced by architects is more imaginative and of a higher standard generally than work produced by building designers. This is difficult to substantiate objectively, but the evidence is clear in the built environment.

Second, the importance of the built environment is the nation's stock of capital is hard to overstate.

Third, the built environment is not a transient national asset. The longevity of many buildings is measured in decades not years: this multiplies the benefits of better design and the disbenefits of worse design.

The leading role of the architectural profession is correspondingly important. Statutory recognition of a minimum requirement before the title of 'Architect' can be assumed is a recognition of the significance of good design in the built environment, the built environment's importance in the capital stock of the nation and the contribution to good design of that massive asset by architects.

In the absence of architectural registration, the high profile architect will be recognised as an individual (as he or she is now) but the contribution of high quality that is made by architects who are not well known (who produce the vast bulk of architectural design) will be unable to be easily obtained by purchasers in the market for good building design because the title 'Architect' will be applied to any building designer.

## RFI 2

Architects acquire a broad knowledge of structures in their formal education and practical experience with the result that they are able to select the most appropriate structural forms for building projects. They are well aware that the final design of the structural component of a project is an engineer's statutory responsibility. In the ACT (this may not be exactly the case in other jurisdictions) if a building plan needs approval under the Building Act, the structure for the planned building must be certified by an engineer. If the architectural design for the building is based on assumptions about its structure that the engineer is able to certify as adequate, or needs to modify only slightly for certification, the overall design will not be affected.

Without this knowledge, two (2) consequences are possible: a conservatism in building design on the one hand that arises from a lack of confidence in dealing with structural limitations and, on the other hand, a reckless disregard for those limitations.

Courses for architecture degrees are of five (5) years' duration and provide considerable wider and deeper exposure to structural design than courses in architectural drafting or building design of a duration of one (1), two (2) or three (3) years.

## RFI 5

We believe that current standards for registration as an architect are appropriate:

*Education.* A five (5) year full-time university course gives sufficient education in design, building construction and the contractual and legislative aspects of the profession. This mix is necessary to produce a well-rounded graduate, suited to practising in a broad-ranging profession like architecture. Other building industry-related courses lead their graduates into more specific careers such as surveying and quantity surveying which are specialties in their own right.

*Practical experience.* Current architect registration requires a minimum two (2) years of practical experience working under the direction of an architect (however, up to six (6) months of the required period may be in allied work, for example, working for a builder). This period gives graduates time to be involved in building contract and office administration, areas of work which are best learnt through experience. We believe that this requirement is valuable and necessary.

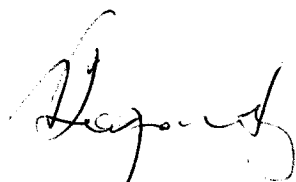
*Architectural Practice Examination (APE).* The objective of the APE is to ensure that architects entering the profession have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the practice of architecture and a capacity to exercise professional skill. The examination concentrates on preparation of architectural drawings, co-ordinating documentation of a building project, establishing the limitations presented by a site, assessing the applicability of relevant legislation, preparing feasibility studies, establishing and co-ordinating specialist consultants and administering project contracts.

We believe that it is imperative that a graduate should have acquired these competencies before working as an architect. We understand that there is a no more rigorous requirement in education for the Australian building industry and also believe that there is no viable alternative to these competencies as pre-requisites for use of the title 'Architect'.

RFI 7

In the ACT the current Act, enacted in 1959, provides only for the registration of individuals, and not companies. We agree that this is a deficiency in our Act and that the role of bodies corporate in the provision of architectural services needs to be dealt with in the Act so that the advantages of the corporate form (for example, access to capital to enable practices to expand quickly or to establish presence in overseas markets) can be utilised for the provision of those services.

Yours sincerely



Narelle Fogarty  
Registrar

8 June 2000