

Productivity Commission  
Architects Inquiry  
LB2, Collins Street East  
Melbourne  
VIC 8003

22.12.99

Attention: Professor Judith Sloan,

Dear Professor Sloan,

**RE: REVIEW OF LEGISLATION REGULATING THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION**

I am writing this very brief response as an architect from the Northern Territory.

To practice architecture in Australia usually requires a five year degree from a university, a minimum of two years practical experience and the satisfactory completion of a practice examination set by the relevant state/territory architects registration board.

This process is open to Australian and overseas students. It is part of a world wide and national system that has been in place for some time. (See Union International Architects (UIA), Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Education Policies and the joint Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) and RAI/Australian Architecture Course Recognition & Accreditation Procedure – DOC ACRP 01 and the relevant state/territory architects registration board for registration details).

Via the National Assessment Panel of the AACA Australian and overseas persons, with or without qualifications, with or without work experience can apply (see also National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR)) for registration as an architect. In addition universities encourage those with either industry experience and or other qualification to seek recognition for prior education or learning.

This process has developed because of the ongoing demand for architects as evidenced by the 5,000 or so architectural students currently studying architecture, the major state/territory projects undertaken by architects. The word ‘architect’ and the profession of ‘architecture’ are associated with excellence. One could argue that this is why so many people undertake and practice architecture?

In a rapidly changing work environment with greater economic pressures architects are the benchmark for excellence in the built environment (construction) industry. They contribute substantially to industry and employment through their designs being realised, students being trained in universities adding to the nations educational resource for the future and generating approximately \$2 million dollars annually through overseas students studying architecture in Australia.

There is no other profession group or individual that has such the breadth and depth of training and experience in the built environment other than an architect. It is therefore inconceivable for those with less facility to be called architects. Architects are able to live and work across the continent and abroad in a variety of cultures, climates and topography, yet they are equipped to provide expert advice to government and communities alike. They generally have a studio based design training that equips them for solving difficult and complex problems on small dwellings, to the most sophisticated structures conceived, such as our own Sydney Opera House. See ‘How Designers Think, the design process demystified’ by Bryan Lawson, Architectural Press, 1997, ISBN 0 7506 3073 6 and much has been developed from earlier an work ‘Reflective Practitioner’, by Donald Schon from the University of Wisconsin, USA, 1973.

The next few decades will see new environmental and sustainability problems face Australia and disaster relief and mass and urban housing putting pressure on governments’ world wide, as never before.

Architects are already working to address these problems and university undergraduate programs are already working with the next generation of architects too. No other group understands the built environment as much as architects and no other group in the built environment adheres to a code of ethics that includes the interests of the community (see RAI A member policy).

As to the process of registration, this can continue to be undertaken by the various boards under the AACA, or another third party with specialist industry knowledge, such as an autonomous 'education and registration college' under the RAI A or taken over by a professional body such as the RAI A.

In summary I believe the existing academic training, registration and appropriate use of nomenclature for architects has served Australia well. It is poised to take on the demanding and complex matters of the future. This means in my view, architects will continue to serve Australia and the region, in which they live and work. The existing process to administer this has also worked well and responded to changing circumstance. If the government decides that it will abandon its current role and responsibility two suggestions for alternatives have been offered.

I will be pleased to provide additional information if requested.

I am currently on study leave from the Northern Territory University. I was former Course Coordinator for a variety of programs at that institute including;

Architecture, 1996 – July 1999

Drafting, 1991 – June 1998

Planning, 1997 – June 1998

I am a member of, and chair of the National Education Committee of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and a member of the National Assessment Panel of Architects Accreditation Council of Australia.

Graham Bell FRAIA  
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