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Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic. 8003

Friday, 18 February 2000

Re: Architects Inquiry

Dear Sirs,

First please let me thank you for allowing late submissions to be lodged. I would like to welcome this inquiry into the building design profession. I have read most of the many submissions and am personally horrified by the attitude of some of the practitioners in the industry.

I would like to wholly endorse the comments made by the Building Designers Association of Australia (BDAA) as a representative body for my profession.

My involvement in the building design industry goes back to 1978, when I started my practice as a building designer. I am one of those referred to by some of the submission as being 'suedo professional' as if the years of experience gained are of no account. In the time I have been pursuing a profession I have a great love for, I have been privileged to have been involved in all manner of projects ranging from carports to multi million dollar industrial/commercial projects. Some of these have been constructed under my direct supervision. Each of these has been executed with the clients needs as the paramount issue.

I feel very strongly about those in the industry who wish to keep the industry at their feet and maintain the elitist attitudes purveying some sectors. I am not casting a blanket aspersion here, but the attitude definitely exists in some quarters.

In respect to the term "*architect*", it is my belief that if you have aspired to and attained such a title you should call yourself such. If this is such a hallowed title, how is it that some of my colleagues refrain from using it even after passing the required exam? I for one am not an architect, nor do I wish to be known as an architect. However I take great exception at bodies such as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects taking sole ownership of the adjective "*architectural*". Having been a target of their unwanted attention, I can truly say that this is a situation that should be addressed by any review undertaken here.

I am proud to call myself a "*Building Designer*" because that's what I do – design buildings. I explain to clients, verbally and in various forms of advertising that I am an '*architectural draftsman*' because I prepare architectural drawings. This is imperative to the public interest, as the public knows that I do not prepare engineering or electrical drawings. If that were the case I would describe myself as an engineering or electrical draftsman and so on. I note that no engineering draftsman or electrical draftsman is challenged by the respective professional bodies that govern the activities of engineers or electricians for the use of that descriptor, yet it happens with alarming regularity in respect to the word '*architectural*'. Why?

If the RAIWA wishes to limit building designers to this extent (which includes not being able to advertise in the Yellow Pages under the "Architects" section, how is it that it allows its members to advertise in the "Building Designers" & "Drafting Services" sections of the Yellow Pages? Some would be given to use the word hypocritical here, but not I. The current legislation of the Architects Act 1921 is merely a vehicle used by the RAIWA to frame mischief by law to protect its interests with no regard for the interests of the public.

In relation to regulating the industry, I agree that some form of licensing and registration should be in place on a national basis for the following reasons;

- Maintain a level of individual proficiency for practitioners.
- That a uniform level of induction as practitioners be adopted across all states.
- That consent authorities receive an acceptable level of documentation.
- Provide clients a level of protection by mandatory Professional Indemnity insurance for practitioners.

As an aside, if for instance the right-wing element get their way and have it that architects and only architects can prepare architectural drawings.....how will all the work get done as it is well known that just the members of the BDAA are responsible for upwards of \$10b worth of work every year?

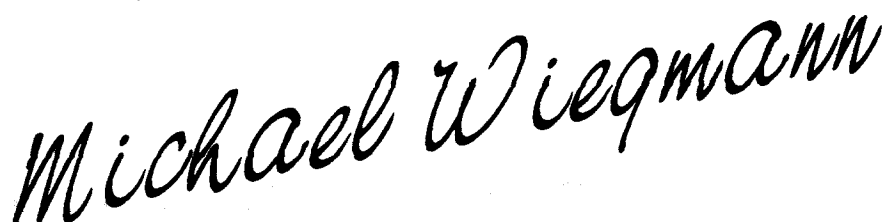
Clearly there is room for all professionals to work and work more closely in the industry. In fact this is the experience I am having in my local area with ever-increasing ties to other professional bodies and consent authorities being fostered by the BDAA at branch level. As an additional of the level of proficiency of the 'suedo professional', I have included the latest copy of the "National Building Designers Brief". This publication has been produced since 1993 in its various forms and exhibits the finalist and category winners of the 1999 National Design Awards. It also shows the industry's view of the BDAA's members by the level of sponsorship support given. Please take this publication as an annexure to this submission.

Some of the issues that should take more of the time of this inquiry are that of;

- *Minimum standard of documentation for council submission* – I am constantly amused and frustrated by the simplistic 'line' drawings that some applicants are gaining approval for, all the while we as professionals spend hours, days and weeks getting the documentation right only to be given a hard time by the consent authority. Gone should be the days where anyone with a kitchen table, grease-proof paper and pencil can submit plans as the industry has now become far to complex for anyone other than those who are practitioners.
- *A great focus on uniformity of standards within consent authorities* – This has been the case in respect for the BCA and Standards Australia, but some of the councils I have dealt with over the years make you wonder if you are actually in Australia, as some actually refuse to adopt certain BCA /AS provisions in lieu of their own.
- *Maintaining the level of professional development amongst registered practitioners* – The BDAA, through its state bodies has, some time ago, implemented a program of professional development that is being vigorously supported by those who have a passionate love for the industry in which they participate.

In closing, I thank the commission again for their indulgence for this late submission, and invite any reader to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wiegmann". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

M. Wiegmann (B.D.A.N.S.W.)
MICHAEL WIEGMANN DRAFTING SERVICE