

Submission to the Productivity Commission re Review of Legislation
Regulating The Architectural Profession

To whom it concerns

As acting Head of the University of Queensland Department of Architecture, I wish to voice my Department's strong disagreement with your draft report. I am keeping my comments short and to the point, as the issues, which the report does not appreciate, are simple and clear.

1. The registration of architects as appropriately trained professionals who have a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the issues involved in the total design of the built environment is vital to the protection of Australian consumers. The thorough accreditation procedures which are tied to the education and registration of architects have been developed over many years and are constantly updated and reviewed.

The skills and training which registered architects possess far exceeds knowledge of building safety issues, and planning issues addressed by planning codes. The full process through to registration of architects encompasses vast intellectual knowledge coupled with experience and practice. The arguments for increased competition totally fail to recognize the fact that there are no equally trained or experienced professionals who are prevented from registering. Therefore, the draft report is really suggesting that lesser trained and experienced designers should be able to present as equivalent professionals. This is actually deceiving consumers, not protecting them. The current simple efficient system, with a few improvements to ensure national equivalence would actually be a positive outcome, rather than the draft report suggestions, which fails to recognize both the real content of the practice of architecture and the need to protect consumers through giving clear indicators of knowledge and experience via registration.

This means that consumers can be confident of the service they will receive, and the level of comprehension of the design problem which will accompany that service.

2. Further, the responsibilities and issues which are concerned with the design of every building, even the smallest, are more involved than those which are immediately evident to the individual consumer. In this sense, the broad environmental and social issues connected with the cumulative effect of many designs, as they grow to become communities, towns and cities are only properly considered by design professionals trained as architects. Therefore, the protection offered to the community extends beyond that offered the individual consumer and extends to the community as a whole. It is naive and unrealistic to

view building design as existing purely within the lot boundary of an individual project. Part of the reason for the five year training of architects is because community interests are included within the expertise that trainees acquire.

3. The principle of consumer protection through the registration of accredited architects is a worldwide phenomenon, internationally understood and internationally regulated. To depart from such a system is again to put the consumer at risk through devising a local variation of worldwide standards.

4. The existing framework does not prejudice any person wishing to practice design. The existing system does however ensure that trained professional architects are clearly distinguished in the consumers' eyes from designers who have lesser educations, knowledge and skills.

5. The value of this registration is well recognised by the many overseas students who pay to complete their architectural education in Architecture at Australian Universities, as it is by the many Australian students who compete to gain places in accredited architectural courses in Australia. The negative economic effects of the system proposed in your draft report are not understood or responded to.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Yours faithfully

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