

# **Standards and Accreditation Study by the Productivity Commission of the Australian Government**

Submission

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This submission attempts to illustrate how the Australian accreditation is perceived by other countries of the world and to provide some experience from accreditation models of other countries / regions.

## **Efficiency and effectiveness of laboratory accreditation services in Australia**

From the point of view of a foreign accreditation system, NATA's work as accreditation body appears to be very effective and efficient. NATA is internationally recognised as a body absolutely competently carrying out accreditation services and being very committed in developing accreditation further, e. g. by participating in international accreditation cooperation, such as ILAC.

As a signatory to the ILAC MRA, NATA is expected to fully comply with ISO 17011. With this regard NATA needs to prove and maintain its impartiality. An accreditation body shall not offer any activities that conformity assessment bodies also offer. It will not be possible for example, to offer PTs (as referred to in the issues paper, Table 2, funding for PT programs) and at the same time to accredit PT-provider.

In most countries it is well accepted that accreditation is a non-competition activity in order to secure its status of top level competence assurance. This status is also part of the policy of the European Commission. However, the disadvantages of such a monopoly status need to be prevented, e.g. by an effective Advisory Board with appropriate involvement of stakeholders and concrete influence by the government.

Care must be taken that accreditation remains a non-profit activity and this needs to be born in mind especially when extending to new business areas.

NATA should have effective procedures to conform to the points mentioned above.

## **Appropriate role for the Australian Government in relation to laboratory accreditation**

Experience from accreditation in Europe affirms the importance of accreditation as an activity of public interest under governmental recognition. This condition is needed to prevent private and legally regulated areas and their requirements drifting apart and leading to mutual non-acceptance and double assessments, as it is currently negatively experienced in Germany, where accreditation is conducted by different accreditation bodies in the private and in the regulated fields.

This governmental recognition is only compatible with a non-competition situation of one accreditation body or system. In this respect NATA's governmental recognition is felt as an essential prerequisite.

In addition, public involvement helps to maintain on a high level both competence and recognition. However, it is therefore of major importance to keep up the trust into the system by strictly carrying out the tasks of competence assessment of conformity assessment activities and demonstrating this to the public. In this respect accreditation e.g. of PT providers and RM producers should always focus on their conformity assessment activities and should not be extended to "producers" in

general, as this will not be perceived as a non-profit activity by the public and might blur the differences between accreditation and certification.

### **Appropriate means of funding activities**

Concerning governmental funding of accreditation care must be taken that a level playing field remains both nationally and with regard to the global market. It is therefore recognised that NATA (JAS-ANZ respectively, see page 5 of the issues paper) is not funded anymore by the Australian Government.

However, especially following and contributing to the work of an accreditation co-operation on the international level, e.g. within ILAC, needs funding and will be beneficial for all parties involved.