14 February 2003

MRA Review
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen
ACT 2616
AUSTRALIA

Dental Council of New Zealand – Submission for TTMRA Review

The Dental Council of New Zealand has no significant concerns with the way TTMR is working in practice. However, the number of Australian registered dentists registering in New Zealand under TTMR is much less than the number of New Zealand registered dentists registering in Australia under the agreement. Some Australian Dental Boards have concerns over this disproportionate number and sentiments of a 'backdoor' type of registration have been expressed with regard to overseas-educated dentists.

New Zealand and Australian standards for registration are no different. However, this council's registration policy is considerably more flexible than those of Australian dental boards. In New Zealand, graduates of schools in the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa and Malaysia are generally registered without the need to sit and pass registration examinations.

Australia requires all overseas trained dentists (with the exception of those from the UK and NZ) to sit and pass registration examination. It appears that South African dentists in particular are using New Zealand registration as an "easier" entry to Australia. They gain NZ registration and then without having lived or practised in New Zealand, use their NZ registration to gain registration in Australian under TTMR. The current retention rate of overseas dentists registered in New Zealand without the need to sit and pass registration examinations is 40% at year two. This is a cause of concern.

The graduate retention rate is also low, but not because of TTMR - rather because of student loans and the resulting high debt load coupled with the low NZ dollar. This makes working in Australia and Britain very attractive. It also follows the migration trend of New Zealanders to Australia that out-numbers the drift in the opposite direction.

The Dental Council of New Zealand has had some ongoing concerns over the "equivalent occupation" concept used in the agreement, particularly with regard to specialist registration. New Zealand and Australian states have differing requirements and fields of recognition regarding dental specialists, and there remains some concerns that TTMR has the potential for one jurisdiction to maintain lower standards or lower current standards and thereby impose these on other jurisdictions with a consequent overall lowering of standards. TTMR applicants may seek specialist registration concurrent to their ordinary registration

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me if you require any or further information.

Yours sincerely

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REGISTRAR