



The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACCA) is the national body established by the state and territory architects registration boards to facilitate and co-ordinate national standards for architects in Australia, and to establish and maintain mutual recognition agreements with overseas authorities.

The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the *Review of Mutual Recognition Schemes* by the Productivity Commission.

July 2008

SUMMARY

AACA and the Australian state and territory architects registration boards consider that the Mutual Recognition Agreement and the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement have had positive impacts on improving the mobility of architects within Australia and between Australia and New Zealand.

The mutual recognition schemes have achieved their primary objectives of removing barriers and simplifying cross-border and cross-Tasman registration arrangements for architects.

AACA would encourage the harmonisation of the state and territory Architects Acts to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mutual Recognition legislation.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT (MRA)

Each state and territory of Australia has its own Architects Act which makes provision for a register of architects and regulates the occupation of 'architect' in that jurisdiction.

There is no national registration system. However AACA maintains a national listing of architects whose names appear on the state and territory registers. The national listing may be accessed from the AACA website and is proving to be a valuable resource for consumers.

Generally the requirements for registration as an architect throughout the Australian jurisdictions are consistent:

- an approved Australian or overseas academic qualification in architecture; or, where no formal academic qualifications in architecture have been obtained, success in the AACA competency based process known as the National Program of Assessment
- a period of practical experience
- successful completion of the Architectural Practice Examination.

These requirements are informed by the AACA *National Competency Standards in Architecture*.

Acknowledging the consistency in the registration requirements for architects the state and territory registration boards report that they regularly register individuals under the MRA, and that the process works smoothly with very little cost impact.

Perhaps the most significant issue in relation to the MRA is the lack of national harmonisation in other key areas of the architects legislation. State and territory legislation is uniform in relation to both the requirements for registration of individuals as architects and for the maintenance of a register in each jurisdiction. However there are inconsistencies in the various Acts that with resolution, would provide further efficiencies in relation to the application of the Mutual Recognition legislation by registration authorities.

Some years ago AACA produced a set of National Legislative Guidelines and Drafting Instructions to assist with the introduction of consistent architects legislation across Australia; despite this initiative there are still differences in the legislation relating to:

- . compulsory professional development
- . professional indemnity insurance
- . adherence to a professional code of conduct
- . approaches to disciplining breaches of legislation.

AACA would encourage a nationally consistent approach to these matters in the state and territory Architects Acts as a measure to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mutual Recognition legislation.

TRANS TASMAN MUTUAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENT (TTMRA)

In general AACA and the state and territory architects registration boards believe that the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement is working effectively. While the numbers of cross-Tasman registrations do not appear to be high, the scheme provides a simple and efficient method for architects registered in one country to become registered in the other.

Increased interaction between the Australian and New Zealand registration authorities, encouraged by the success of the TTMRA, has led to other important initiatives. The adoption of

- . a common system for the accreditation of professional courses/programs in architecture, and
- . common standards for registration.

In 2005 the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB) adopted the *Australian Architecture Program Accreditation and Recognition Procedure* as their process for accrediting professional programs in architecture offered by New Zealand universities.

The NZRAB also adopted the *AACA National Competency Standards in Architecture* as the benchmark standard of competencies required for registration in New Zealand.

These arrangements mean that the academic standards of professional courses in architecture offered by Australian and New Zealand universities are consistent and, importantly, that the standards of competence required for registration as an architect in Australia and New Zealand are uniform.

AACA acknowledges the role of the TTMRA in facilitating the above initiatives and the consequent strengthening of the already sound relationships between the registration authorities in both countries. AACA recognises the value of the TTMRA in relation to the mobility it allows to architects between Australia and New Zealand; it also recognises the accessibility it provides for the export of Australian architectural services to an overseas market.