



17 July 2008

Mutual Recognition Review
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA). We are making this submission in relation to those health professions that are registered within Western Australia which are: Medical Radiation Technologists, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Psychology.

The MRA and TTMRA have been very beneficial for these six professions as it has assisted the Dept of Health in Western Australia to more effectively recruit these professions. There is a general shortage of health professionals in these areas and Western Australia has benefitted from being able to employ professionals from the other states (and New Zealand) to help meet this workforce shortage.

In general, it is felt that the costs of implementing and maintaining mutual recognition have been met by the fees paid by the registrants in these professions. It is felt that maintaining that character checks are not mutually recognised is important. The continued requirement of character checks within Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions helps ensure that any legal difficulties of a registrant are not missed.

In terms of the National Registration Scheme for these five professions, it is felt that this will help to address some of the workforce issues within Western Australia. However, there is concern that some of the unique features of registration within Western Australia (for example, specialty title in psychology) could be lost under the new scheme and that it is important that the new scheme set the registration criteria to be consistent with the current state legislation that sets a more stringent requirement. Such an action would lead to increased likelihood of better consumer protection.

The issue of bilateral engagement with third countries should be considered. In health, we see a global workforce and being able to easily recruit health professionals from other countries will be another strategy for meeting workforce issues in Western Australia. Whatever recognition model is developed, it will be important to address issues around the equivalence of training in one country to another as educational programs in other parts of the world are quite different from the Australian model. It might be more useful to think of a mutual recognition framework by professional group with a specific country rather than a general framework to be applied to all countries. For example, there may be a mutual recognition agreement between Australia and Sweden for physiotherapists that would have certain



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agreed educational, training and scope of practice elements but the mutual recognition agreement for physiotherapy between Australia and Mexico could have different agreed educational, training and scope of practice elements. It is felt that this degree of specificity is required in order to ensure adequate consumer protection.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. Please feel free to contact us if there are any questions or need for further information.

Yours truly

Dr Deborah Wilmoth, PsyD
A/Chief Health Professions Officer
Department of Health
Level 1B
189 Royal Street
East Perth WA 6004