

22 December 2008

Review of Mutual Recognition Schemes
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 8003

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) welcomes the opportunity to comment to the Productivity Commission's *Review of the Mutual Recognition Schemes Draft Research Report* and commends the substantive work gone into the review process to date.

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Overview

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ("RICS") RICS is the leading global professional body for the property professions with over 140,000 members practising in 120 countries." It is an independent, membership organisation committed to acting in the public interest and providing impartial, authoritative advice on major issues affecting business and society. Our mandate is to maintain and improve standards in the property professions.

RICS members have the highest education, training and professional standards. Our members will have undertaken degree level study, continuing professional development and a minimum two year period of assessed professional experience in the areas of work listed, in order to qualify as MRICS. Professionals can qualify for membership in any of 17 distinct 'faculties'. These faculties include: Construction, Commercial Property, Valuation, Facilities Management, Project Management and Building Surveying.

RICS is obliged under its Royal Charter to act in the public interest at all times. As such RICS sets and regulates education and training standards for its members through the accreditation of degrees, the assessment of graduate trainees, professional guidance notes, mandatory valuation practices and standards (the red book) and we provide and monitor continuing professional development (life long learning).

Across Australia and New Zealand RICS;

- is a professional body, registered as 'RICS Australasia PTY LTD'
- has 2,000+ fully qualified Chartered Surveyor Members and 3,000+ Student and graduate trainee members
- accredits 15 university degree programmes
- runs over 80 CPD events nationally per year

The RICS members are governed by a strict code of conduct and disciplinary requirements. RICS Regulation is responsible for taking appropriate action in cases where RICS members or firms fall short of the standard expected of them.

Comment

In general terms as an organisation we endorse the broad recommendations and findings of the Draft Report with the following specific comments:

- RICS is in favour of the mutual recognition scheme for the occupations and we support reinforcing and streamlining mutual recognition within Australia and between Australia and New Zealand.
- We support the underpinning intent under Mutual Recognition Schemes that the occupational standards requirement by one participating party should be acceptable to others.
- While RICS does not endorse 'lowest common denominator' standards and, indeed, seeks to lift standards of the property professions across the board, it does not support actions by any regulator to simply ignore their obligations under the TTMRA by choosing not to recognise registration attained in another jurisdiction.
- RICS strongly argues that differences in standards between jurisdictions should be resolved in other fora and professional bodies such as RICS must play a vital role in this. This is particularly pressing in the case of the valuer profession, where there are marked differences in standards required for registration across the jurisdictions. In the meantime, individuals seeking to move between jurisdictions should not be penalised.
- Where variations in occupational standards between jurisdictions occur, mechanisms should be used to resolve these. RICS supports draft **Recommendation 5.3** that *'the mechanisms through which the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Trans-Tasman Occupations Tribunal can be approached to make a declaration on occupational standards should be clarified.'*
- Further, RICS supports the **draft finding 5.3** that states *'an effective process for resolving regulator concerns about significant variations in occupations standards across jurisdictions is required.'* At this stage we have not had time to consider possible options nor any costs and benefits
- RICS also supports **Recommendation 5.5** calling for clarification in the mutual recognition legislation of the types of conditions that registration authorities can impose at the time of registration.
- Finally, we would like to see a greater role for professional bodies, such as RICS, within the licensing schemes. Whereas licenses are black and white (i.e. either you are registered or you aren't), professional body memberships can raise standards over and above the minimum. It is important that recognized professional bodies including RICS Chartered Members be included in the list of qualifications accepted for relevant licences. The process should also ensure a robust and yet simple process for accreditation of prior learning for national and international qualifications.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input in this regard and look forward to further consultations with governments as they consider your final report.

Yours sincerely



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