

National Registration for Australian Architects

Reducing red tape and the regulatory burden upon architects while maintaining the protection of consumers of architectural services in Australia

Background

Public policy has embraced the concepts of open markets, competition policy and mutual recognition of registered occupations. Significantly, in August 2010 the Australian Government's Productivity Commission's Research Report *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Business and Consumer Services* included a recommendation that the Australian Government should work with state and territory governments to implement a national register for architects.

In July 2011 the AACA formed a Work Group to facilitate the implementation of a national registration system of registration for architects utilising the existing framework of Mutual Recognition across State and Territory borders by working with the State and Territory Architect Registration Boards.

Mutual Recognition legislation implemented by all Australian jurisdictions has provided the ultimate vehicle by which Australia's standards for registration as an architect can be regarded as those of one country, rather than those of eight different jurisdictions. Internationally, AACA has formally promulgated this advantage at forums attended by countries forming the Asia Pacific Region.

Concept

This proposal for national registration builds upon the principles of Mutual Recognition. It is primarily aimed at reducing compliance and administration costs, encouraging labour mobility and further enhancing international trade in architectural services, whilst ensuring consumers of architectural services are protected.

All Architect Registration Boards in Australia have agreed to work with the AACA towards achieving a national system for registration of practising architects based upon modification of current mutual recognition arrangements utilising the existing framework of state and territory registration authorities.

Benefits

All architects can benefit from a national registration process and to be known internationally as an Australian Architect.

Currently, there are around 14,000 architects on Architect Registers around the country. While the number of architects currently registered in more than one jurisdiction is relatively small the move to national registration looks to the future. The profession is increasingly mobile and electronic means of communication in the professional context is increasing.

Under the proposed system of national registration architects will have the opportunity at any time to practice in all states and territories simply by renewing their registration annually in their home jurisdiction (as determined by entry on the Australian Electoral Roll).

Information for architects and consumers will be accessed from the Australian Architect website www.australianarchitect.org.au which will contain a national listing of registered architects, obligations that architects must meet in each jurisdiction, and consumer protection information for the public.

National registration under Mutual Recognition maintains the integrity of legislation in each state and territory. It does not require additional national legislation and does not require a common date for all jurisdictions to join the national registration system.

In summary the proposed model has the following benefits.

- ensures that architects, registrable in any jurisdiction in Australia, can be registered to practise nationally on the basis of a single application and single fee while retaining current arrangements as far as possible
- maintains protection for consumers of architectural services as consumers will easily be able to identify architects via the national register which will be published on the Australian Architect website
- continues the Registration Board's consumer protection responsibilities in their jurisdiction
- provides for simple and effective implementation within current Architect Registration Board structures avoiding administrative problems created by different requirements across jurisdictions and is achievable with minimal legislative amendment to State and Territory based legislation

Cost implications

This model is cost effective as it utilises the resources of existing organisations – Architect Registration Boards in each State and Territory and the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia. No new body will be established.

Adoption of this model will result in a reduction of income for Architect Registration Boards as the number of architects on a jurisdiction's register will decrease. However it is anticipated that the new arrangements may provide for efficiencies as there will no longer be a need to register architects under mutual recognition.

All architects potentially benefit from the change and they would bear the minor cost to maintain a neutral revenue position for registration authorities as a result of the implementation of this model. Over time, this cost would become undifferentiated and integrated into each Board's cost base.

There will be costs associated with the development of the Australian Architects website to be shared between the Architect Registration Boards and the AACA. However, it is anticipated that the ongoing costs will be minimal.

Next steps

The Work Group established by the AACA will work with the State and Territory Architect Registration Boards to prepare a detailed implementation plan.

Given the current status of legislative review of Architects Acts in jurisdictions across Australia it is possible that the national registration system proposed could be in place by 1 July 2012.

Stakeholders

Architects in Australia provide professional services in connection with the planning and the design, construction, enlargement, conservation, restoration or alteration of a building or group of buildings. These professional services include, but are not limited to:

- planning, strategic and land-use planning,
- urban design,
- provision of preliminary architectural studies, design, models, drawings, specifications and technical documentation,
- coordination of technical documentation prepared by others as appropriate and without limitation (consulting engineers, landscape architects and other specialist consultants),
- construction economics, and
- contract administration, monitoring of construction and project management.

Architects complete an approved tertiary qualification in architecture. This qualification in conjunction with a period of mandatory practice and successful completion of the nationally recognised Architectural Practice Examination enables an individual to apply for registration as an architect in a State or Territory.

Architect Registration Boards are statutory bodies responsible for administering the legislation controlling registration of architects in their respective jurisdictions.

The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) is the national organisation responsible for advocating, co-ordinating and facilitating national standards for the registration of architects in Australia and for the recognition of Australian architects overseas by the relevant Registration Authorities. The AACA is constituted of nominees from all State and Territory Architects Registration Boards in Australia.

The Australian Institute of Architects is the peak body for the architecture profession in Australia.

The Association of Consulting Architects – Australia is an association of employers that promotes architecture, informs members on the conduct of their business and represents the members' interests in industrial matters.

Overview of Proposed National Registration Model

