



Architects Accreditation Council of Australia

Discussion Paper on the Future COAG Regulatory Reform Agenda

Submission by:

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

October 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission is made by AACA to the Business Regulation and Competition Work Group Secretariat in the Department of Finance and Deregulation in response to the Stakeholder Consultation Paper on the Future COAG Regulatory Reform Agenda.

One of the potential themes for reform identified in the Consultation Paper relates to enhanced workforce mobility and participation. Within the discussion on this issue in the Paper it is suggested that architects could be incorporated within the National Occupational Licensing System (NOLS).

While AACA supports the COAG Seamless National Economy initiative and acknowledges architecture to be a mobile profession, it does not support the inclusion of architects within future tranches of the NOLS as the profession is already well regulated and Mutual Recognition of registration is working throughout all jurisdictions. The profession already has nationally agreed standards for initial registration.

AACA and the Architect Registration Boards have already developed a system of national registration for architects, using the Mutual Recognition model. We see the initiative as responding positively to the Productivity Commission's 2010 Research Report *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Business and Consumer Services* which recommended the implementation of a national register for architects based on Mutual Recognition principles. We are seeking the implementation of this system of national registration of architects as soon as possible.

The proposed national registration process for architects is elaborated upon in the following pages.

General background

- There are currently approximately 14000 architects registered on the architect registers around Australia
- An architect who wishes to be registered to offer services in all jurisdictions across Australia is currently required to pay almost \$1500 in registration fees each year
- Domestic demand for architectural services is about \$2.9 billion; industry export earnings totalled \$120 million in 2010-11

The concept for National Registration for Architects

- 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
- Our proposal for national registration builds upon these principles of Mutual Recognition
- It will establish a single-transaction Australia-wide registration process that allows an architect to move seamlessly across jurisdictions, and to be known internationally as an 'Australian Architect', as opposed to the current situation where an architect has to register in each jurisdiction in which they wish to offer their services and accordingly can only identify themselves as being a 'NSW architect', or 'Victorian Architect', etc
- It will reduce compliance and administration costs, encourage labour mobility and further enhance international trade in architectural services, whilst ensuring consumers of architectural services are protected
- Government funding is not being sought to implement this process. The 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
- Importantly, proposed legislative amendments are minor. 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

Benefits of National Registration under Mutual Recognition Principles

- The proposed national registration system will allow consumers to easily identify architects via the national register which will be published on the Australian Architect website
- 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)
- The total cost for an architect to register nationally, which is currently about \$1500 per annum, will be significantly reduced
- International mobility will be enhanced and an architect will be known internationally as an Australian Architect
- The process 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

COAG's seamless national economy initiatives

National registration for architects, using the Mutual Recognition model, addresses the Australian Government's comprehensive suite of productivity reforms by

- Enhancing mobility of architects, reducing barriers to workforce participation both domestically and overseas
- Simplifying the registration process to one single transaction, thereby reducing compliance and administration costs to business. The long term goal is to facilitate architectural business in both the domestic and global market place
- Ensuring that consumers of architectural services are protected, and providing them with more choice of service providers

Implementation of the national registration process for architects

- 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 Architect Registration Boards.
- Architects Acts in many of the jurisdictions across Australia are currently being reviewed. This provides an opportunity for the minor amendments required to implement the proposed national registration process to be incorporated into that legislation. With the support of governments it is possible that the national registration system could be in place by 1 July 2012.