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Mutual Recognition Schemes
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To Whom It May Concern

RE: MUTUAL RECOGNITION SCHEMES DRAFT REPORT

On behalf of Master Painters & Decorators Australia (MP&DA) I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Mutual Recognition Schemes Draft Report* published by the Productivity Commission in June 2015.

Our support for the Mutual Recognition Schemes

MP&DA supports the continuation of the Mutual Recognition Schemes for licensing and registration in the painting and decorating occupations providing the industry benchmark for required competencies is consistent in all jurisdictions.

MP&DA supports the view that mutual recognition for painters and decorators provides:

- Increased opportunities for Australians to work across the country, and for Australians and New Zealanders to work in each other's country.
- Improved cooperation between regulatory authorities.
- Certainty for workers considering moving between jurisdictions.
- Licensing authorities a faster way to consider applications for recognition of equivalent licences.
- Employers with mobile workforces greater ease to relocate workers more quickly across state and territory borders.

Applications without a current licence

One area of concern with the current system is the process for an applicant whose licence in their home state is no longer current, because the requirement to obtain a Certificate of Reciprocity from their home state creates a delay.

LEADING PAINT BRANDS



MP&DA supports the ability for the registration body to conduct background checks, including police clearance declarations.

Compulsory professional development

MP&DA supports in principal the need for ongoing up-skilling of painters and decorators to keep pace with new technologies.

The painting industry supports structured continual professional development to ensure painters' skills and qualifications keep pace with the introduction of new products and new technologies. This professional development should cover environmental issues such as:

- Safe disposal of paint waste.
- Safe use of toxic materials such as industrial coatings.
- Increasing demands by consumers in regards to low and zero Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) paints (generally water- based products with little to no chemical release into the atmosphere)

Professional development should also include awareness of changes to the building code and regulations.

However, at this stage, continuing professional development would be difficult under the Mutual Recognition Schemes and we believe it is better left for further consideration at a later review.

Automatic mutual recognition

MP&DA does not support the automatic mutual recognition proposal for two reasons.

First, an automatic system would be difficult to administer without the National Occupational Licensing Scheme (NOLS) that was abandoned several months ago.

The second reason is that an automatic system would create concerns about the absence of a requirement to register locally undermining the capacity of regulators to protect consumers. Regulators depend on registration fees to fund enforcement activities; without a formal registration requirement, they will have no knowledge of the people practicing in their jurisdiction.

National harmonisation

MP&DA strongly believes apprenticeship training under National Training Package should include progression pathways (for example, Certificate III to Certificate IV) that are consistent with the licensing or registration regimes in all jurisdictions.

In addition, the scope of works for painters and decorators needs clarity. This will require, for example, a clear definition of what 'painting' includes. This is what national licensing in its terms of reference was trying to achieve. As this did not occur, the industry needs to create a clear definition now.

Migrant entry

MP&DA believes migrant offshore assessment needs refining to ensure that at the offshore point of application for a visa, the assessment is consistent and readily articulates into the existing training packages.

The current requirements are unclear and inconsistent across the country. Each state has different requirements and processes for assessing qualifications a migrant painter has gained overseas and issuing a painter's registration or the equivalent of a Certificate III qualification.

Migrants need a clear understanding of the pathway to employment in Australia. If mutual recognition is to be consistent and transparent, this is an area in urgent need of rectification.

Additional options

The discussion paper also proposed a number of options for consideration including:

- Requiring people to reside in the jurisdiction where they first register for a period of say 12 months before seeking registration elsewhere under mutual recognition.
- Attaching additional requirements on service providers from other jurisdictions to protect public health, security or the environment, on the grounds that registration requirements in the person's origin jurisdiction are inadequate.
- Refusing to recognise the qualifications of an individual who undertakes training in one jurisdiction, registers in another jurisdiction and then seeks to have their registration recognised in the jurisdiction where they trained.

In agreement with the Commission, MP&DA is not convinced that any of these three options are worth pursuing, as they would add to the cost of administering mutual recognition schemes and hinder the cross-border movement of short-term residents who have a genuine reason for moving.

Conclusion

In conclusion, MP&DA supports the continuance of the mutual recognition schemes for the painting and decorating industry, with continual improvements by regulatory authorities to streamline the process wherever possible.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Murray Thomas
Chief Executive Officer