

Architects Board of Western Australia

Submission to Productivity Commission Public Hearing - Tuesday, 6 June 2000

1. The Architects Board of Western Australia (The Board) strongly disagrees with the Productivity Commissions (PC) recommendation that "State and Territory Architects Acts under review be repealed after a two-year notification period".

2. The PC's rationale for its conclusion that the costs of current legislation regulating architects outweigh the benefits, and that the net public benefits are negative is ill founded and based on unsubstantiated argument. E.g. the PC's lack of detailed explanation on what it considers to be 'shortcomings in the market for building design and related services'.

3. The report shows the PC has little understanding of the building industry and the profession of Architecture. To base the report on the definition of an Architect contained in the "Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary (1992)" is scandalous. It should be noted that the dictionary definition, if correctly transcribed by the PC, is inaccurate and inappropriate because of its general language usage.

4. The report shows the PC has no understanding of the difference in qualification levels required by Architects and 'other providers of architectural services'.
Are Midwives as qualified as Obstetricians - they can both do the same job i.e. deliver babies?
Are Dental Therapists as qualified as Dentists i.e. they can both do fillings?

5. The effect of the suggestion by the PC that architects could adopt some other restricted title under self-regulation has not been investigated. The PC in the report has offered no assessment of the impact on the market of this exclusive title and the resultant cost to the community. In fact the PC has not addressed the issue of the "cost" of self regulation at all.

6. The PC has failed to understand that the community recognises the title Architect and what that title represents. How long will it take for the community to learn that the title is meaningless if anyone can use it? At what cost to the community would this lesson be learnt?

7. The PC has failed to understand the international implications of repeal of the Acts. The recommendations of the report if accepted would be a serious blow to Australia's hopes of expanding overseas markets for export of architectural services.

8. The PC has failed to understand the implications on the Australian educational institutions providing overseas students with an architectural education. This valuable source of revenue to the universities would vanish and it would fall upon the community to find its replacement.

9. Of the valid criticisms of the existing system raised in the report the PC has failed to acknowledge that the Boards and the AACA have been trying for many years to correct these inadequacies. They have however been continually thwarted in their efforts by government intervention or lack of action.

There are many other inaccuracies and false conclusions contained in the report and many of these are highlighted in the AACA submission, which this Board fully supports.

The Board is of the opinion that even if the inaccuracies and fallacies are exposed the PC will not change its recommendation.

The Board views the public hearing process as means by which the PC can tidy up its report and correct their most glaring errors with the help of the profession.
The Board is of the opinion that the report should be presented as is 'warts and all' to later be shown as the misleading document that it is at the appropriate federal and state levels.

Brian Wright
Chairman - Architects Board of Western Australia.