

Productivity Commission
Administrative Matters
Michelle Cross

Hi Michelle,

I am a practicing architect with 8 years postgraduate experience in the private and government sectors. I am just starting to get informed about the extent in which this inquiry may affect people like myself, women architects and migrants.

From what I have read, I have the impression that there is not a deep understanding of what the regulation of the profession does for the community. I deal with these issues day by day.

Many of public buildings, (sport pavilions, child care centres, libraries etc), the ones that were built in the 60s, 70s, and even today, offer a sad example of what happens when we do not use the expertise of an architect.

Many of these buildings were designed by 'architectural designers', draftpeople, builders. Even today, I have to insist on a nearly daily basis, that because of the importance of these buildings, they should be designed by qualified architects. It is true that qualified architects do not always guarantee a good result, but, very much increase the chances.

The problem, in my opinion, is not that regulation does not work, it is that we have not educated the public enough. It is in this sense that we need government support, and not the obliteration of one of the only platforms that give us the credibility we require.

We often see newspaper ads promoting new developments in which no architect has participated, sometimes they cite 'architect designed houses'. In a country like this, architect designed houses should be the norm and not the exception. We too often see gross examples of this, expensive finishes, with no architectural feel, and nothing but expensive finishes.

In local government, architects like myself, are the ones not only trying to raise the standard of our public buildings but also introducing new technologies and new social ideas that are tied to the way we live and experience the city. These issues are not addressed by other professionals in the field of building design. We are now introducing solar technology in our buildings, photovoltaic, and we are happy to address issues of universal access, passive surveillance etc. I have to say, that I have not seen this type of genuine commitment and interest in other 'building designers'.

The problem is that these issues are difficult to explain to the public. A building designed by a non architect will at the end be more affordable than the one designed by the architect. I spend hours investigating on these new technologies, hours in designing the best possible solutions that will make people using those buildings happier to be in there. I invest money and time in further educate myself to understand the society that give shape to those buildings. The final result maybe a silent achievement, but, I know is there.

I always thought that we needed an inquiry to solve our problems inside the profession, to help us put the the architectural practice in the place it deserves, to help us to have more architect designed houses and buildings, to reclaim architecture from the hands of developers, builders etc.

There are many problems that need to be addressed, the lack of women architects in the top of the list, the increasing abuse from 'master architects' of their fellow younger architects (it would be interesting to check the unofficial wages and conditions for younger architects, unpaid overtime between others). At the end, these situations and not the regulation, are really damaging the profession.

I come from Chile and at the moment Chile does not fully recognize my studies in Australia. However, Chile and England are soon to sign an agreement of mutual recognition for the Architectural studies and for their qualified professionals. These can only happen because both parties have a recognized professional body that regulates the profession and the educational curriculum.

I believe we need protection and help to solve our problems, not deletion.

Sorry for any mistake of this very spontaneous letter and please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information on any of the issues I have mentioned.

I would appreciate any information on the development of the inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Beatriz C. Maturana
ARCHIMAGE
107 Springvale Road, Nunawading
Melbourne Victoria
Australia
w/h 9230 4708 a/h 9873 3706
archimag@vicnet.net.au