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SA

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Architects Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
L132, Collins Street East  
Melbourne  
VIC 8003

Dear Sirs,

### **Review of Legislation of the Architectural Profession**

#### **Registration of overseas trained architects.**

I understand that the Productivity Commission is seeking information about experiences in obtaining registration from overseas trained architects.

My training was in the UK, where I was registered in 1962. Following a successful career in a large UK practice, latterly as a senior partner, I came to Australia in 1976 to take up an academic position. In 1977 I was appointed as Head of Architecture at the South Australian Institute of Technology, and applied for registration to the Architects Board of South Australia. I was known to the Chair, Registrar and other members of the Board and registration was granted with a minimum of formality. Very shortly afterwards I was elected to the Architects Board, in 1978, remaining an elected member until 1989, shortly before returning to the UK in 1990.

#### **Benefits to the community.**

You will know that in the UK registration has been retained by the Government, in my view with good reason. A significant point is that any architects wishing to practice as sole practitioners, partners or directors must carry appropriate professional indemnity insurance as a condition of continuing registration. Thus in the event of a client successfully claiming against a registered architect there is some guarantee of securing recompense. This would not be the case without registration linked to indemnity insurance, as "architects" could go bankrupt without necessarily providing any recompense to successful claimants.

#### **Export of architectural and education services.**

This is an area in which I have experience as a former partner and consultant in international practice, a former member of AACA's Education Committee, a former COPO examiner, a member of ARCUK's Education Committee from 1992 to 1998, Head of School at SAIT from

1977 to 1990, and Dean of Architecture, Art and Design at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside UK from 1991 to 1998. Currently I serve on the Alumni and Friends Committee of the University of South Australia, with particular reference to overseas alumni, and am Director of Development and Co-operation, Australasia of the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside. I have travelled regularly in S.E. Asia since 1982 on matters of education, recruitment, registration requirements and reciprocal recognition of educational and professional qualifications in architecture.

In my view the abandonment of registration by Australia would be extremely damaging to the export of both architectural and education services. Competing countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and those of the EC, which all retain registration, would be given an immediate advantage, particularly in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Hong Kong which themselves have registration requirements. There are no signs of these countries relaxing their registration requirements, indeed rather the reverse, and the absence of Australian registration will seriously weaken the recognition of Australian architects and architectural education as worthy partners. I know that UK practices and universities will be swift to capitalise on this.

At present Australian university schools of architecture successfully attract good numbers of overseas students, particularly from S.E. Asia, largely because their courses are recognised by registration boards, because Australian registration is valued and respected, and because Australia is currently a less expensive and safer place to access and study. Lack of formal course recognition by registration boards will be a severe disincentive to study in Australia, as it will remove the facility to register in, say, Malaysia with an educational qualification recognised by Malaysia's own registration authority, PAM, as satisfying its educational requirements for registration.

You talk of "alternative mechanisms" which could be devised to meet export requirements. I would like to know precisely what you think these would be, and how long they would take to come into force. Will they be in place before registration is repealed, should that occur? If there is any significant delay of even a few months then much damage will be done to exports. Competitors will move in swiftly to fill any vacuum created by such shortsightedness.

Yours faithfully,

(signature)

Professor Cooper