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The Commissioners
Productivity Commission
Architect Inquiry
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The first person not of 'royal line whose name history records was Imhotep the architect for the stepped pyramid at Sakkara on the Nile commissioned by the Pharaoh Zoser of the 2nd dynasty in 2778 BC. Since that time all the great buildings of history have been designed and their construction supervised by architects. The title architect is derived from the Greek ARCHI - chief TEKTON - technician/artisan and although some like Pheidias and Michelangelo were primarily sculptors and others like William, of Sons was a master mason, Sir Christopher Wren was an astronomer but they were all architects.

To outline the history of architectural practice in this State, the Queensland Institute of Architects was founded in 1888 and set standards for practice but the 1920s found a rise in the number of bogus operators in the field and to protect the public, the State Government brought down the Architects Registration Act of 1929. This body together with the Institute of Architects by then amalgamated into a Federal body, regulated the profession. In the late 1980's the Trade Practices act outlawed the Scale of Minimum Professional Charges and the Code of Ethics which had set the standard of conduct between the architect and his client and between architects themselves. Compliance with the TP act created fierce competition in fees charged with resultant lowering of the opportunities offered by design alternatives and the quality of documentation prepared. Some, facets of contractual procedure were deemed to be unnecessary and others were considered better handled by other experts - cost control by quantity surveyors, contract administration by project managers. Whilst not doubting the competence and integrity of these people, they lacked training in the field of creative design, so that their interpretation of the original concept was frequently distorted and lost

Although few people actually engage an architect themselves during their life time, they are never the less vitally concerned with architecture because they are surrounded by it in all aspects of their daily lives. Most houses are not actually designed by an architect but all are greatly influenced by houses that were architect designed, because these set trends that are avidly copied and adapted by project builders and their designers. Also almost all other buildings - schools, churches, office buildings, hotels, shopping centres, hospitals, theatres -in fact any building of any civic importance has been designed by an architect. This is because only schools of architecture train their students to develop a creative thinking process which, combined with a mind trained to discover the detailed function of an intended

building, enables them to interpret the client's requirements into a three dimensional building concept. This creativity is the intrinsic factor that gives a client value for money. It is this creativity that Premier Peter Beattie is seeking when he announced on the 18th May an architectural competition for a Gallery of Modern Art. He said "I want it to be an icon - I want the gallery to be the best we can have" and went on to express the hope that "the new building will be Brisbane's answer to the Sydney Opera House or the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim, acclaimed for turning Bilbao in Spain into a major tourist destination".

This is what separates Architects from buildings designers and this is the value for money that architects can provide.

Concern about the effect of deregulation of the architectural profession and the loss of the exclusive use of the title architect is keenly felt by architects, particularly those who are sole practitioners. These men and women, after completion of a long course of study and a period of employment and travel to gain experience, enter private practice in a fiercely competitive market, their only weapons being their skills, their reputation and their title of Architect. If this latter is stripped from them their years of university study though not wasted for them are not valid argument to a client who sees the title used by someone not equally qualified. This is not only unfair to the properly qualified architect but to the client also, because he has no obvious benchmark to make a judgement as to which person he will engage. The sole practitioner is further at risk because the type of practice they engage in embodies all aspects of the architectural process – design documentation, tender process, supervision, contract administration. The bigger offices usually carry out projects by means of a team of specialists with each stage of the building project being handled by a different partner or employee, but the sole practitioner is on his own and needs fees from all aspects of a project to stay in business. Surprisingly this sort of small business enterprise is the most efficient and productive of all architectural practices.

Lastly I would bring to the Commissioners attention the CSIRO's report of their research into the effect of fee bidding which was published in part in the RAIIA memo dated July 1999 a copy of which is attached. This shows the effect of the deregulation caused by the introduction of the Trade Practices Act and if further fee cutting is the result of this Commission's findings, only still higher building costs will result.

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Sole Practitioner