

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RESEARCH STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND POPULATION GROWTH ON PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH IN THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

SUBMISSION BY AUSTRALIAN PHARMACY EXAMINING COUNCIL INC

As in most countries, the practise of a profession in Australia requires evidence of an appropriate level of education and experience. Pharmacy education differs around the world both in quality and training, and pharmacy delivery varies enormously in different countries. The practise of pharmacy in Australia in health care is unique and practising pharmacists in Australia must be competent at the level the Australian community expects.

The Australian Pharmacy Examining Council Inc (APEC) was established to assist overseas trained pharmacists to obtain registration in Australia and thus enable them to practise their profession in Australia. APEC comprises members from each Australian state and territory registering authority and in conjunction with those registering authorities has devised an examination procedure to assess the competence of overseas trained pharmacists. This examination process consists of an English test, a Stage I Examination (multiple choice), a period of supervised practice and a Stage II Examination (clinical). The framework for the assessment is the "Competency Standards for Pharmacists in Australia 2003" prepared by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

The APEC examination process tests the competency of the applicant to practise contemporary pharmacy in Australia and there are very few applicants who are not eligible to enter the APEC examination process. Once eligible, the applicant must demonstrate their theoretical and clinical knowledge of pharmacy and be tested at the level of an Australian pharmacist. This is seen to be a fair and equitable process and therefore APEC has very few issues of non-recognition of overseas trained pharmacists.

Under current reciprocal arrangements with Ireland, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, pharmacists who trained in those countries and are registered to practise in those countries are not required to complete the APEC examination process, but are required to undertake a period of supervised practice in Australia (usually 4 weeks) and to be familiar with Australian drug laws. The United Kingdom has indicated it will withdraw from this arrangement from 1 July 2006. It is intended that from that date graduates from the United Kingdom and Ireland will undertake a modified recognition process which is currently being developed by APEC, although some current state legislation will still allow reciprocity until such arrangements are removed from state Pharmacy Acts. A review is currently taking place which will allow holders of qualifications from countries with systems which have been accredited by the Australian accreditation body to undertake the same modified process as pharmacists from the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In July 1999 APEC was listed as the skills assessing authority for hospital and retail pharmacists under the Migration Act and pharmacy is currently a profession which is listed on the Migration Occupation in Demand List (MODL).

Since 1981 over 650 overseas trained pharmacists have completed the APEC process and have been registered to practise pharmacy in Australia and many are in full time work in community, hospital or industry practice.