

# Architects

## Working Party Ready to Assist Government

**Maureen Lewis**

**I**N MID NOVEMBER THE PRODUCTIVITY Commission released its final report, recommending the repeal of the Architects Acts, but, as an alternative, it also recommended establishing a system of national registration. A state/territory working group will be set up for this purpose and, already well advanced in formulating its own set of principles, the RAIA, ACA, and ACAA joint working party will offer to assist the new group.

On 16 November the Federal Treasurer released the final report of the Productivity Commission: Review of Legislation Regulating the Architectural Profession.

As expected, the Commission's preferred option was to repeal the existing Architects Acts and statutory certification of architects. The Commission expected that this would lead to architects establishing a system of certification and marketing the advantages of their qualifications. This is essentially a system of self regulation.

October *Memo* stated that the RAIA Council had established a joint working party which includes representation from the RAIA, the ACA and the AACA.

The working party considers that self regulation is not in the public interest. Membership of a professional association would still be voluntary and if there is no restriction on title, unqualified people could practice using the title 'architect'.

As an alternative to abolishing the acts, the Commission also recommended improving the legislation by establishing a system of national registration with harmonised state and territory legislation.

Architects and the registration boards have wanted this for some time. The Commission's report provides the opportunity to introduce reforms, producing legislation that will be the best of what the world has to offer in this field.

The Treasurer announced that all states and territories have agreed to participate in the development of a national response to the review. A state/territory working group will be set up for this purpose.

The joint working party will be contacting the state and territory governments to offer assistance to the state and territory working group in developing its response to the Productivity Commission's report.

The architects' joint working party is well advanced, although there is still a large amount of detail that needs to be decided upon. The working group is committed to the following principles, and considers them to be essential elements of any new system:

- ▶ Continued registration of architects, and the title 'architect' to be used only by those who are registered. This way, consumers will know they are dealing with a qualified person when they engage an architect.

- ▶ The establishment of a single national registration system that will apply in all jurisdictions in Australia.

- ▶ A more cost effective arrangement for registration and regulation for architects. This will produce greater benefits for the public by introducing harmonised legislation that provides for independent complaints handling and disciplinary procedures.

It is essential that a consistent message is maintained. Members [of the RAIA] are, therefore, encouraged to make any suggestions and comments directly to representatives on the architects' working party, or to their chapter presidents or state managers, who will pass comments directly on to the working party. ■

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