
From: Ian Pedersen
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NSW REGISTRATION

Registration of professional engineers nationally is a problem. Mutual recognition of one jurisdiction's system by the other jurisdictions does not exist. Australia needs to have a single registration/licensing/pre-qualification scheme which covers all engineers in Australia which is recognised and legislated by every state and territory. The Architects have a single scheme.

The problem is not restricted to engineers. Licensing of trades (electricians, hairdressers, etc) across state borders needs to be nationalised. They should be invited to discuss their concerns and join the push for national systems.

For engineers to practice in Queensland they have to be members of RPEQ. We have mutual recognition systems for engineers around the world but not in our own country!

Engineers Australia has been calling for national registration for many years but with no effect. There needs to be a top down approach.

The following strategy is suggested as a start to solving the problems:

1. All affected parties (EA, Consult Australia, NECA, etc) should form a taskforce to address the problem and draft a business case for a single federal registration/licensing/pre-qualification system. ACIF (appropriately funded for managing and drafting the business case etc by the associations) would be an appropriate vehicle as it has most organisations interested in the building and construction industry at the table. Those associations not in ACIF would join the taskforce.
2. For engineers the Queensland RPEQ system should be adopted (the national registration system could be run by QLD on behalf of the states). The other national associations joining the registration/licensing/pre-qualification taskforce would nominate the system they believe is best practice currently being used by one of the states.
3. The taskforce should meet with the Federal Ministers responsible for this matter and lobby for the business case, supported by the Federal Minister's, to be taken to COAG for adoption.
4. A marketing/lobby plan promoting the national scheme should be drafted and promoted through the media.

Other Issues.

The construction industry needs to come together and agree on a qualification system for each construction (builder) and trade in the industry and establish a national register. For example, the system used for Tier 1, 2, etc Construction Contractors should be adopted for any building over 3 storeys whether private or public sector. I am sure the MBA and ACA have advice on this matter.

Local Councils should prohibit building contractors who are not pre-qualified on the relevant national register undertaking work. In approving developments above 3 storeys Councils must require a registered Architect, registered Engineers for each discipline (structural, electrical, plumbing, mechanical) etc to undertake the design AND be engaged to inspect the works during construction. We need to consider going back the Clerk of Works system used decades ago. The inspection reports by the designers should be provided to the builder AND copied to Council. One of the flaws in the current system is that the developer/builder does not reimburse the designers appropriately if they even engage the designer for the construction phase.

In the life of a building, the cost of the professional consultants to properly design and inspect the construction is less than 3-5% of the life cycle cost of the building but they have 70% influence on the outcome. It's about quality and compliance.

Building Contractors should also be required to carry the indemnity and be liable for all trades, and not pass it on to their sub-contractors which often occurs.

To insure there are funds to rectify defects instead of arguing about them, the developer should be required to provide a bank guarantee for say 5% of the project value current for 10 years after completion to capture developers (and builders) undertaking a project and going into liquidation soon after the project is completed should be implemented.

A side issue is that the Procurement of Services in each state requires Pre-qualification of each individual service. For example, a Consulting Engineering firm providing Project Management services needs to prequalify for say PM Hospitals in each state (9 registrations). To prequalify for PM on a School project they have to register separately (9 registrations). One major consulting firm had a few years ago over 70 pre-qualifications that had to be kept current over a range of engineering services.

The cause of the problem is the bureaucracy in each state and territory who insist on and have convinced their governments that they are better than any other jurisdiction and must regulate their own systems. The cost of this duplication to businesses and tax payers is large and for no productivity benefit.

In raising the issue of Procurement of Services is to point out that any registration system and pre-qualification system must be national, has to be thorough, and only done once to any one jurisdiction but accepted by all other jurisdictions (Federal, State and Local governments).

I look forward to a tightening of the construction industry's performance and adherence to quality and safety.

Ian Pedersen
Hon.FIEAust; CPEng Exec; NER; RPEQ.
Past National President, Engineers Australia
Past Chair, ACIF.

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