

**aaca**

**Industry Profile:  
The profession  
of architecture in  
Australia.**

# Industry Profile: The profession of architecture in Australia

Architects Accreditation Council of Australia - June 2015

## Australia's architecture sector

**Architects are skilled professionals at the centre of Australia's built environment industry, a \$100 billion sector employing over a million people. The built environment industry is significant for both its size and for the critical national role played by the provision of dwellings, commercial spaces, public buildings and infrastructure.**

The AACA estimates that in June 2014 there were approximately 11,090 registered practising architects ('architects') in Australia, based on total registrations of 12,751 discounted to account for registrations in multiple jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup> This equates to 0.5 architects per 1000 people, similar to the UK and France, higher than the US (0.3 per 1000 people) and New Zealand (0.4 per 1000 people), but lower than Germany (1.6 per 1000 people) and Italy (2.4 per 1000 people).<sup>2</sup>

1 Based on figures provided by State and Territory Architects' Board; an exact figure of unique registrations is impossible to determine as there is no consolidated national register and the actual number of architects registered in multiple jurisdictions is not known.

2 Based on figures provided to the AACA by international architectural bodies.

3 IBISWorld, Industry Profile: Architectural Services in Australia, August 2014.

According to industry analysts IBISWorld, in 2014-15 there are an estimated 13,555 businesses in the Australian architectural sector (including sole practices) with an income of \$6.4 billion in 2014-15, generating a profit of \$603 million. This includes a range of businesses providing architecture-related services, not simply registered architectural firms.<sup>3</sup>

Architects work with building contractors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, tradespeople, plant operators, drivers and many other occupations to deliver finished building projects to clients. In addition to their core design function, the architect traditionally plays a 'trusted advisor' role with clients that can cover the whole of a project lifecycle from feasibility to post-commissioning work.

To prepare for this role, architects study a wide range of subjects including design studio, technology, history and philosophy of architecture, environmental sustainability and professional practice. Architects must be both talented designers and skilled communicators, able to balance client wishes, aesthetic values, planning and environment requirements, building codes, good design principles and construction costs in the delivery of a project.

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All Australian architects are registered by a state or territory Architects' Registration Board. Most states require architectural firms as well as individuals to be registered or listed, although there are substantial differences in requirements from state to state. Mutual recognition of registration applies between the eight Australian jurisdictions and also with New Zealand via the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement.

Australia and New Zealand use a 'title registration' model: to lawfully call yourself an architect and/or offer architectural services to the public you must be registered. Unlike some countries, where architects have a sole licence to undertake specified classes of work, there are few professional services that are reserved to architects in Australia. One consequence is that people who are not registered as architects (who may or may not hold architectural qualifications) are able to offer similar services as 'building designers' or related titles.

4 Based on a count of duplicate register entries undertaken by Gill Matthewson at the University of Queensland as part of her PhD research on women's participation in the Australian architecture profession (forthcoming, 2015).

## **For individuals to be eligible to apply for registration as an architect, candidates must:**

- complete a five year higher education program leading to an accredited Master of Architecture qualification or accepted overseas equivalent (see the section on 'Architectural Education' below);
- obtain at least two years' experience working in the industry; and
- pass a three-part competency assessment process – the Architectural Practice Examination – including completion of a logbook, a written paper and an interview with current practitioners.

The number of currently registered architects by state and gender is shown in Table 1. As this number includes multiple registrations, the number of unique registrations is approximately 13 per cent lower.<sup>4</sup>

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**Table 1: Registered architects  
at 30 June 2014**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
<b>Registered</b>	3706	3645	2460	1271	696	418	343	212	12751
<b>Males</b>	2804	2708	1932	1053	576	363	281	178	9895
<b>Females</b>	902	937	528	218	120	55	62	34	2856
<b>Reg. companies</b>	1337	908	500	244	132	-*	53	32	3206

Source: State and Territory Architects' Boards  
(\*companies are not registered in Tasmania)

**While Architects' Registration Boards don't collect detailed demographic information on those obtaining registration, according to the 2011 ABS Census, of the people who nominated their occupation as 'architect':**

- 60 per cent were based in Sydney or Melbourne;
- 11 per cent were based outside capital cities;
- 80 per cent were working full time;
- 52 per cent worked more than a 40 hour week;
- 37 per cent were business owners or sole traders;

- 63 per cent earned above the average income (compared with 66 per cent of all professionals); and
- 27 were indigenous (0.002 per cent, compared with population parity of 3 per cent).

Note that the number of self-identified architects in the Census at 14,973 is somewhat larger than the number of registered practising architects at around 11,090. It is likely the Census figure includes a number of non-practising architects and people working in architectural practices who are not themselves registered. The latter class creates some overlap with the Census category Architectural Draftsperson, which had 10,761 people in the 2011

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Census. Combining the two categories gives a total architectural professional and para-professional workforce of 25,734 people.

Although women have comprised over 40 per cent of architecture students for many years, female participation in the industry drops sharply in the years after graduation, as shown in Table 2. This is discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Most of those identifying as architects in the Census had a bachelor degree as their highest qualification as shown in Table 3 overleaf. The standard qualification for registration shifted from bachelor to masters level in 2008, i.e. from a single five year bachelor degree to a three year bachelor plus two year masters 'Bologna' model.

**Table 2: Female participation in architecture**

Age	Males	% of Age Group	Females	% of Age Group
20-24	359	52.79	321	47.21
25-29	1183	54.29	996	45.71
30-34	1439	63.11	841	36.89
35-39	1468	69.74	637	30.26
40-44	1208	69.79	523	30.21
45-49	1085	75.09	360	24.91
50-54	1156	85.06	203	14.94
55-59	1150	89.77	131	10.23
60-64	964	92.96	73	7.04
65 and over	798	94.10	50	5.90

Source: Julie Connolly, Architects in Australia  
– A snapshot from the 2011 census

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**Table 3: Highest qualification held by architects**

Qualification	Architects
Postgraduate Degree	2830
Grad Diploma and Grad Certificate	317
Bachelor Degree	10174
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	887
AQF Certificate	64
Year 12	408
Year 11	28
Year 10 or below	21

Source: ABS, Census of Australia, 2011

A significant number of architects were overseas-born, predominantly from a small number of countries as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Country of birth for architects in Australia**

Country	Architects
Australia	9157
England	718
Malaysia	535
New Zealand	385
Germany	248
Hong Kong	246
India	225
China (ex. Hong Kong)	224
South Africa	221
Italy	169
Philippines	100
Other countries	2643

Source: ABS, Census of Australia 2011

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## The business of architecture

**After a period of sustained growth from 2001 to 2008, the built environment industry in Australia went into a sustained downturn in 2009 and is only now emerging into a patchy period of recovery. The downturn brought flat/falling revenue and squeezed margins to architectural businesses, whose income is strongly linked to overall industry conditions. However, as the current recovery strengthens, IBISWorld estimates that architectural services revenue will grow by 2.6% per annum over the five years to 2019-20, to reach \$7.3 billion.<sup>5</sup>**

Architectural practice remains highly fragmented compared with other professional services areas such as law or accounting. There are a handful of large firms employing hundreds of people each, but none with more than two per cent of the market for architectural services. A large majority of architects in Australia work in small practices (often as sole traders). A small number of architects also work in State and Local Government agencies.

According to the ABS, in 2012-13 there were 7,027 non-employing businesses in the architecture sector, 6,147 businesses with 1-19 employees, 203 businesses with 20-199 employees, and only 14 businesses with 200 or greater employees.<sup>6</sup>

**The range of roles undertaken by practicing architects is wide and can include:**

- Pre-design, scoping and feasibility work
- Building design
- Documentation of building projects
- Procurement of building services
- Contract administration
- Oversight of building works
- Post-occupancy evaluation
- Other design services (e.g. interior design, urban design, landscape architecture)
- Consultancy work, including project management and strategic planning
- Training and education (e.g. adjunct and sessional university teaching)
- Service to the profession (e.g. boards, committees and juries)

<sup>5</sup> IBISWorld, op. cit. at Note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Industry 2012-13 (8155.0), April 2014.

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According to IBISWorld, core pre-design, design and documentation work (items 1-3) typically constitute around two thirds of work undertaken by architectural businesses. The architectural client base is split between residential building (36.3%), commercial/industrial building (37.3%), public works (18.8%) and non-building work (7.6%).<sup>7</sup> An estimated 5 to 10 per cent of single residential homes are architect designed, while architects are involved in the majority of public buildings, commercial spaces and multi-unit developments. Across a range of practice areas, architects face growing competition from building designers, building contractors, engineering concerns and industrial/interior design firms.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Dana Cuff, 'Architecture's Undisciplined Urban Desire', *Architectural Theory Review*, 19:1 (2014), pp. 93-94.

<sup>9</sup> *Building Design*, *World Architect 100*, available at <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/wa-100>

While architectural practice is largely carried out in small enterprises, the business of architecture is gradually changing. IBISWorld notes that large architecture practices are growing – particularly at the expense of mid-tier firms – and many architects also now work in major engineering and project management companies such as GHD and AECOM. The focus of this last category of company is on delivering whole projects at the lowest cost and design-related factors may not be the top priority in decision making within this framework.

UCLA Architecture Professor Dana Cuff has written that:

Post-2008 recession restructuring has underscored the dominance of large architectural firms, and that dominance is secured by the fact that large firms control international work [...] In an unstable, risk-averse economy, clients with large and complicated projects seek new qualities like ability to manage potential litigation, endurance to withstand the long timespan of projects, and a menu of specialists that can handle any contingency.”<sup>8</sup>

According to the annual survey by *British Building Design* magazine, the largest Australian architectural firm is Woods Bagot (ranked 7th internationally), which has 17 studios located across Australia, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America.<sup>9</sup> In the 2012-13 financial year, Woods Bagot in Australia employed an architectural workforce of 391 people and generated revenue of \$75.5 million. The other Australia-based firms making the *Building Design* list of the world's 100 major architectural concerns were Hassell (32nd), HBO+EMTB (43rd), Cox Architecture (46th), The Buchan Group (60th), Sinclair Knight Merz (79th) and Thomson Adsett Architects (86th).



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Although difficult to quantify, some major overseas-based companies have been increasingly engaging with the Australian market through a range of mechanisms, including buy out of local firms (e.g. HDR Architecture from the USA which bought out local firm Rice Daubney) and forming alliances with Australian companies (e.g. DWP of Thailand which has joined with top 10 firm Sutera Architecture to form DWP Sutera). The architectural activities of GHD (Australia) and AECOM (USA), which are not generally separately identified by those companies, would likely also place them in the top tier of providers in Australia. In addition, some of the world's most prestigious firms – such as Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners (UK) and Gensler (USA) – have recently opened Australian offices.

design by taking on more diverse consultancy work.

Current uncertain conditions in the built environment sector will continue to bring changes. The consolidation of mid-tier firms into large (often diversified) professional services companies has already been mentioned. Another area of change is the increased interest in strategic partnerships among architectural firms, and between architectural firms and other elements of the built environment sector, in another approach to creating more sustainable business models. Individual architectural firms are also looking to broaden their revenue base from traditional building

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## Key architectural bodies in Australia

### Architects Accreditation Council of Australia

**The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACCA) is a not for profit company owned by the State and Territory architect registration boards. It is the national organisation responsible for advocating, coordinating and facilitating national standards for the registration of architects in Australia and for the recognition of Australian architects overseas by the relevant Registration Authorities.**

The AACCA has developed and maintains the Architectural Practice Examination (APE), a nationally consistent, competency-based assessment process for candidates seeking registration as an architect in Australia. The APE has been adopted by all Australian State and Territory architects registration boards as the single national examination in architectural practice. In addition, the AACCA is closely involved in the process for accrediting architecture qualifications offered by Australian universities,

together with the Australian Institute of Architects and State and Territory architect registration boards.

The AACCA is responsible for the assessment of overseas qualifications to determine equivalency to an Australian qualification for the purpose of registration as an architect. The AACCA is also the nominated body for assessing qualifications for the purpose of migration to Australia as an architect. In addition, the AACCA is the lead organisation for the negotiation of mutual recognition of registration for architects between Australia and overseas jurisdictions.

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## State and Territory Architects' Boards

Each State and Territory of Australia has its own Architects' Registration Board established under legislation to register architects, conduct disciplinary investigations, pursue unregistered use of the term architect, accredit programs of study and educate the public on architectural issues. All eight boards are represented on the AACA.

### **The eight Boards are:**

- NSW Architects Registration Board
- Architects Registration Board of Victoria
- Board of Architects of Queensland
- The Architectural Practice Board of South Australia
- Architects Board of Western Australia
- Australian Capital Territory Architects Board
- Board of Architects of Tasmania
- Northern Territory Architects Board

## Australian Institute of Architects

The Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) is the main professional body for architects in Australia, representing 12,000 members (not all of whom are registered architects). A range of membership categories are available, including full member, graduate member, affiliate member and A+ (corporate) membership.

### **Membership provides access to a professional community and a range of other benefits including:**

- continuing education programs;
- law and practice advice, including Acumen advisory notes;
- bulletins and publications, including Architecture Australia magazine;
- sustainable design advice through the Environment Design Guide;
- an ongoing program of awards, networking opportunities and speaker events; and
- engagement with university architecture schools, including by participating in accreditation visits.

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The AIA represents architects on a range of broader built environment bodies, including the Australian Construction Industry Forum and the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council. Through its policy and advocacy work, the AIA promotes innovative and appropriate environmental design, and lobbies to improve the quality of the built environment.

## Association of Consulting Architects

The Association of Consulting Architects (ACA) is the peak body representing architectural employers in Australia. The ACA helps architectural firms navigate the changing world of practice by providing regular advice and information on business and employment matters, by promoting awareness of and discussion about business issues, and by advocating for better business practices and legislative frameworks. The ACA's membership includes a range of business types from sole practitioners to large architectural firms.

## Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia

The Association of Architecture Schools

of Australasia (AASA) comprises the heads of the faculties, schools and departments offering accredited degrees in architecture in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The AASA provides leadership and advocacy on issues including quality professional undergraduate and graduate education of architects and related professions; research and scholarship in relation to architecture and the built environment; and policy and community engagement in relation to architectural education.

## Government Architects Network of Australia

The Government Architects Network of Australia (GANNA) is a national collaborative network offering each Government Architect's Office the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, experience and resources of other Government Architects around the country. The position of Government Architect exists in each Australian State and Territory, except Tasmania where the position lapsed with a change of government in 2012. Each Government Architect has a whole-of-government leadership role providing strategic, independent expert advice to Government about architecture and urban design, particularly concerning the design and procurement of public buildings and spaces.

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## Architectural education

In common with other major economies, Australia requires a five year course of post-secondary study as a pre-requisite for architectural registration. This typically takes the form of a three year bachelor degree followed by an accredited two year Master of Architecture (MArch) degree program. The AACA, jointly with the AIA, maintains the Australia New Zealand Architecture Program Accreditation Procedure that facilitates accreditation by each State and Territory Architects Registration Board of programmes offered in its jurisdiction. This involves a review of architecture schools offering accredited degrees at least every 5 years by an expert panel, which makes a recommendation to the relevant Board.

**There are 18 Australian universities that are currently accredited to offer the MArch degree:**

- Bond University
- Curtin University
- Deakin University
- Griffith University
- Monash University
- Qld University of Technology
- RMIT University
- University of Adelaide
- University of Canberra
- University of Melbourne
- University of Newcastle
- University of New South Wales
- University of Queensland
- University of South Australia
- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Western Australia

While the initial bachelor degree is not accredited in Australia, each university specifies a 'benchmark academic pathway' through which the majority of students are expected to come. This will be a degree such as a Bachelor of Design (Architecture) which provides a foundation in architectural studies. In some cases, a significant proportion of the pathway qualification may be in common with broader design and/or built environment courses of study.

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Students with successful performance in the pathway bachelor degree are generally guaranteed admission to the accredited masters program, while students with other suitable initial degrees are admitted on a case-by-case basis. In a variation to this approach, Melbourne University has begun to offer a three year accredited masters program for students without an architecture-related pathway degree, and the implications of this alternative model are still to be fully worked through by the sector.

10 Australian Institute of Architects, Architecture Schools of Australasia Handbook, 2014.

11 Based on a 70/30 split of domestic and international students, a funding amount of \$18,400 per domestic (CSP) students, and a typical annual fee of \$28,000 for an international student.

12 Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Statistics: Students, 2013.

13 Michael J. Ostwald and Anthony Williams, Understanding Architectural Education in Australia, Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2008.

14 Gill Matthewson, op. cit. at Note 4.

Australia's architecture schools recorded 1293 graduates from accredited Masters programs in 2013, which is an increase of nearly 50 per cent from 2009.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the schools enrolled 9524 equivalent full time students in bachelor and masters level architectural study in 2013, collectively bringing over \$200 million to the university sector.<sup>11</sup> According to Department of Education and Training data, there were also around 300 higher degree by research (PhD and MPhil) students studying architecture-related topics in 2013.<sup>12</sup>

**A five year course of study for architects is needed to cover a large amount of academic ground that can include:**

- design and documentation (up to 50 per cent of total study);
- architectural theory, history and philosophy;
- building science, materials and technology;
- communication, visual representation and information technology;
- professional practice and building law;
- urban planning and environmental sustainability; and
- construction project management.

A detailed study of architectural education in Australia was published in 2008 by Michael Ostwald and Anthony Williams with support from the Australian Teaching and Learning Council.<sup>13</sup> The report found there were around 300 full time academic staff in Australian architecture schools (76 per cent male) and that this number had been gradually falling since the 1990s. More recent research by Gill Matthewson suggests the number reduced further to 270 by 2012 (64 per cent male).<sup>14</sup> According to Ostwald and Williams, academic staff divided their time between 40 per cent teaching, 27 per cent research,

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<sup>15</sup> Oswald and Anthony Williams, op. cit. at Note 11, p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

23 per cent administration and 10 per cent other activities.<sup>15</sup> The student:staff ratio of around 25:1 could be considered high for a professional field of study. Many academic staff felt challenged by the pressure from university management to be more research active, while still maintaining high teaching and administration loads. An additional challenge was the aspiration that architecture academics retain a connection to professional practice, with 56 per cent no longer practising and nearly half of these having last practised over a decade ago.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of curriculum, Oswald and Williams found that that the tight requirements around course accreditation had led to a 'de-facto national curriculum'. This maintained national standards, but created a somewhat homogenised student experience.<sup>17</sup> In common with other professional areas of study, there is an expectation that small group practicum (commonly called Design Studio in the architectural context) will form a substantial part of degree study. As universities have faced reduced funding-per-student, architecture schools have tended to preserve the Design Studio and architectural theory elements of study, while in some cases limiting building science and professional practice offerings and arguably not

engaging sufficiently with new elements of practice such as sustainable building.

An area where there is significant variation among universities is the treatment of electives and general education ('breadth') subjects, with some degrees having very limited options outside the architecture school and others actively encouraging or requiring students to take external courses. External subjects may be from other design-related areas (e.g. interior design or landscape architecture) or in unrelated science, social science or humanities fields. This approach potentially widens the perspective of architecture students, but some claim it has the drawback that a significant proportion of architecture qualifications in certain universities are not now taught in an architecture-specific context.

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For people who may have extensive experience in architectural practice, but do not hold an accredited qualification, the AACA has provided an alternative pathway towards registration, known as National Program of Assessment (NPrA). The NPrA is primarily a design exercise which takes the form of a complex architectural project. NPrA candidates must respond to the project brief being in the form of a report and companion drawings. It is expected that NPrA Candidates will be capable of demonstrating an ability to make judgements and decisions at a level appropriate to enable successful Candidates to apply for APE.

The AACA is currently undertaking a review of the NPrA to consider eligibility for the program, communication with applicants and other improvements that can be made to the program. A separate Built Work Program of Assessment is also offered by the NSW Architects Registration Board for those with 10 years' experience in providing design, construction and management services similar to those offered by an architect, and who are able to put forward a complex project for assessment 'as built'.



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## The journey to registration

**Only a proportion of those who study architecture go on to be architects. The number of people completing a second stage (two year MArch degree) was around two thirds of the number of completions for the first stage three year bachelor degree in 2013.<sup>18</sup> In turn, the number of people obtaining registration for the first time on the basis of an Australian qualification was around half the number of people completing an MArch degree.**

It is likely that most people studying architecture initially intend to pursue registration, but for a range of personal and professional reasons some take other directions. There are many alternative career paths for those with architectural qualifications, from generalist management and policy positions, to work in architectural firms not as a registered architect, to work in other fields of design (e.g. landscape architecture, interior design, urban planning, industrial design, jewellery, fashion). It is also important to note that, as Australia uses a 'title registration'

model, people can work in architect-like roles indefinitely – including rising to senior management and even partnership positions in firms – without there necessarily being an imperative to undertake registration.

At the same time, registration conveys key benefits in terms of public and peer recognition, and is particularly important for those wanting to start their own practice. Graduates seeking registration first need to find employment under the supervision of an architect and develop the capacity to offer professional services to the public in a 'real world' environment. There is a minimum two year period of practical experience before graduates can sit the APE (some of this experience can be gained prior to the completion of the masters program). However, the average time from qualification to professional exam is more like five years owing to the need to complete 3300 logbook hours and to gain experience across a range of practice areas which are not always readily available in graduate positions.<sup>19</sup>

While all states accept the APE as the basic registration requirement, there are some differences in state legislation varies in the other matters (such as Queensland's more detailed fit-and-proper-person tests) taken into account in

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, op. cit. at Note 7.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Institute of Architects, Graduate Survey 2013, p. 5.

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considering whether to grant registration as an architect. Some states also have different categories of registration. Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Western Australia have non-practising categories, restricted to those wishing to transfer from the practising category. South Australia has a Limited category, while NSW has a temporary registration category for overseas registered architects. None of this has been found to constitute a major impediment to the effective operation of Mutual Recognition between states. Although the path to registration is somewhat different in NZ, the use of common architectural competencies and university accreditation requirements have helped ensure the application of the wider Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement has largely been problem free.

There are nonetheless certain elements of the current registration system that may create issues for architects working across multiple jurisdictions, for example the lack of common Continuing Professional Development requirements and inconsistency in the manner of registering companies – a much bigger issue discussed in the AACA submission to the 2015 Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mutual Recognition Schemes.<sup>20</sup> The AACA supports further harmonisation of requirements between states and territories (and where

feasible between Australia and NZ) over time. This would ideally include automatic mutual recognition (the so-called ‘drivers licence’ approach). There has also at various times been discussion of more full reform, including a harmonised system based on template legislation. In practice, mutual recognition based on substantially common registration requirements has been found to work well, and so the significant adjustment needed to move to a fully national system has not so far been a key priority for government or the profession.

As the proportion of women graduates obtaining registration is lower than for male graduates, there has been discussion within the sector as to whether there are impediments to registration that apply particularly to women. A major Australian Research Council project led by Naomi Stead of the University of Queensland (with much of the research undertaken by PhD candidate Gill Matthewson) found women comprising only 21 per cent of registered architects and 14 per cent of practice partners despite being nearly half the quantum of graduates.<sup>21</sup>

The study considered a range of factors – including practice culture and the nature of the examination process – that may contribute to this shortfall.

20 AACA, Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mutual Recognition Schemes, February 2015, available at [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/187296/sub020-mutual-recognition.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/187296/sub020-mutual-recognition.pdf).

21 Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership, see <http://archiparlour.org>. This study has resulted in the publication of the ‘Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice’ which address a number of challenges to improving retention of women.

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22 Susan J. Shannon, Naomi Webb, Yishu Zeng & Jenna Holder, 'Why Architecture Graduates Do Not Register as Architects: A Quantitative and Qualitative South Australian Study 1999-2011', *Creative Education*, 5:16 (2014), pp. 1540-1558.

23 Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, op. cit. at Note 7.

Another detailed study of architecture graduates in South Australia suggested that women valued the 'prize' of registration less than men, relative to the long hours and relatively low pay involved in graduate positions prior to registration.<sup>22</sup> In addition, this study found some women graduates believed it was difficult for them to obtain suitable mentoring and/or the range of experience required for registration, while some also felt architectural firms did not do enough to accommodate family responsibilities.

There are also notably low numbers of architects in rural areas of Australia. For example, there is only one registered architect in the entire of NSW west of Wagga Wagga. Partly this reflects a difficulty experienced by all professions in attracting suitable people to practice in rural areas and sustaining a critical mass of work to keep them there. There are moreover no architectural schools outside of major centres, and fewer than 10 per cent of MArch students coming from regional areas.<sup>23</sup> In addition, with few existing architectural businesses, it is hard for graduates wanting to live in the regions to get a start, prepare for registration, and have access to a broader community of professional practice.

Indigenous architects remain extremely uncommon, with 27 recorded in the 2011 Census, even though Indigenous architecture and design more broadly have exerted a major influence on Australian architectural practice. The first known Indigenous graduate of an Australian architectural school only graduated from the University of Sydney in the 1980s. Architecture has so far not had the concerted effort to attract and retain Indigenous practitioners that other professions such as medicine have pursued, although this may be changing through the establishment of organisations such as Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria. The number of Indigenous students studying undergraduate architecture has increased in recent years and this will hopefully flow through to a larger number of MArch graduates and registrations over time.

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24 Ibid.

## Migration and mutual recognition

**Australia has a significant annual intake of migrants with architecture qualifications, with the 2011 Census showing 38 per cent of architects having been born overseas (although this includes a proportion of people who came to Australia as children).**

**For skilled migrants nominating architecture as their occupation in 2013-14 (noting that some architects may also come to Australia on family, partner or humanitarian/refugee visas), the Department of Immigration issued:**

- 43 Temporary Skilled Sponsored (Subclass 457) Visas
- 26 Permanent Employers Sponsored (Subclass 186) Visas
- 7 Permanent Regional Sponsored (Subclass 187) Visas
- 173 Permanent Independent (Subclass 189) Visas

Many of these Visa holders are overseas nationals who have studied in Australian

schools of architecture and remained in the country after completion of their studies on Temporary Skilled Graduate (Subclass 485) Visas. According to Commonwealth Department of Education and Training data, around 30 per cent of MArch students in Australian universities in 2013 were overseas nationals – many of these students on graduation naturally gravitate towards seeking residency in Australia.<sup>24</sup>

**There are also six MArch programs from three jurisdictions outside Australia that are accepted at face value as equivalent to Australian qualifications:**

- University of Auckland
- Victoria University of Wellington
- UNITEC Institute of Technology
- National University of Singapore
- University of Hong Kong
- Chinese University of Hong Kong

For accredited Australian and these recognised overseas qualifications, the AACA provides a streamlined verification for migration eligibility purposes. For other qualifications, a more detailed case-by-case process of skills assessment is applied. The AACA in the past 5 years has conducted 1070 verifications of Australian and recognised overseas qualifications,

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and 814 successful skills assessments (together with 920 unsuccessful assessments) for other architectural qualifications.

Overseas qualification holders who wish to register as an architect in Australia go through a two stage process of a Provisional Assessment (a skills assessment for migration purposes also qualifies as a Provisional Assessment) followed by a Review of Academic Equivalence (RAE). This is a comprehensive process that involves a detailed interview a candidate's student academic portfolio, and the content of the course leading to their qualification(s), to determine whether they meets the academic requirements for registration in Australia, i.e. qualification(s) equivalent to an accredited Australian architecture qualification.

The AACA has a parallel process, the Review of Graduate Equivalence (RGE), whereby people with overseas qualifications in architecture, who no longer have their student academic portfolio but who meet certain other criteria, can obtain an assessment of their standing vis a vis Australian educational standards that includes assessment of their graduate experience. Both the RAE and RGE are currently under review.

Once a prospective architect has a recognised qualification (or equivalent) through one of the above pathways, and has gained at least two years' professional experience (one of which must be in Australia), they will be eligible to go through the APE process and seek registration from the relevant State or Territory board.

It should be noted that the majority of migrants with architectural qualifications do not register as architects in Australia. In 2014, only 47 overseas trained architects successfully completed the final stage of the APE – compared with 529 Australian trained candidates – and the number of overseas-trained candidates taking the APE has been in decline for a number of years. This relates in large part to the low numbers having their degrees recognised through the RAE/RGE process, which has averaged under 50 successful outcomes a year for the last five years.

For experienced architects from selected countries, Australia's participation in the APEC Architect Program offers a 'fast track' to registration for architects with at least seven years' post-registration experience in their home jurisdiction. Reciprocal rights are in turn available to experienced Australian-registered architects. The NSW Government

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25 NSW  
Government,  
Response to the  
Creative Industries  
Action Plan, June  
2013, p. 31.

recently identified export of Australian architectural services as a key priority in their response to the Creative Industries Taskforce.<sup>25</sup> Currently APEC Architect mutual recognition arrangements have been reached with Japan, Singapore and Canada. Suitably experienced architects from these countries need only go through a short Supplementary Assessment Process by interview in order to obtain registration in any Australian jurisdiction.

The objective of the Supplementary Assessment Process is to provide Registration Authorities with confidence that those seeking registration in Australia understand the general principles and requirements governing practice in Australia and have the capacity to apply such principles safely. The APEC Architect Program is in its early days and to date four overseas registered architects have obtained registration in Australia.

There is substantial potential for Australia to expand mechanisms for mutual recognition in the future – through both the APEC Architect Program and other arrangements – and discussions are ongoing with a number of countries. The key elements that Australia would look for in potential partners are accredited five year university programs

with sufficient coverage of the key elements of architectural education, a compulsory period of graduate professional experience and a rigorous examination process for registration candidates. It should be noted that while key jurisdictions (such as the USA, UK or Hong Kong) would prima facie meet these criteria, many other countries have substantially different arrangements. For example, not all countries have a specified period of graduate practice/ internship prior to the professional exam (e.g. Italy), while others specify a graduate practice period but do not require a professional examination (e.g. Germany). Many countries (e.g. Spain and Latin America) register architects on the basis of qualifications alone, while other countries (particularly in Scandinavia) do not have registration of architects at all, although they may specify professional standards by different means.

# **aaca**

**For more information contact**

**The Architects Accreditation Council of Australia**

**Suite 1, L2, Ethos House  
28-36 Ainslie Place, Civic Square  
ACT 2600 Australia**

**T (612) 6230 0506**

**E [mail@aaca.org.au](mailto:mail@aaca.org.au)**