



**ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA**

29 January 2009

Korea FTA Taskforce
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
R. G. Casey Building, John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221

Dear Sir/Madam,

Engineers Australia is the peak body for engineering practitioners in Australia and represents all disciplines and branches of engineering, including information technology. Engineers Australia has over 84,000 members Australia wide and is the largest and most diverse engineering association in Australia. All members are bound by a common commitment to promote engineering and facilitate its practice for the common good.

Engineers Australia has invested a large amount of time and energy in developing and facilitating trade in engineering services at a multilateral level through the APEC Engineer Register, the Washington Accord and other international engineering agreements.

In most countries, engineering is an “accredited” profession and as a result, engineers are required by law to be licensed before they provide professional services or use the title “professional engineer”. Many other professions such as accountancy and legal services are also subject to accreditation or licensing requirements.

These licensing requirements can often operate as significant barriers to trade in professional services. This is because in addition to having professional qualifications, licensing requirements contain other conditions such as completing practical training, passing examinations and meeting language, good character and reputation, citizenship or residency conditions.

While several countries including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, Switzerland and Finland have no, or very limited legal restrictions on the provision of engineering services, the US, Canada, Japan and Singapore operate more restrictive licensing procedures.

The removal of these hurdles will rely on increasing the international recognition of qualifications and practice competency and the negotiation of professional accreditation and reciprocity agreements. These developments are an important means for professional service providers to gain international market access. This is why government support of the work already done by Engineers Australia to support international trade in engineering services is so important.

Korea, like Australia, is a member of the Washington Accord and APEC Engineer Register, which opens up opportunities to move forward on issues related to trade and engineering services under the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Engineers Australia believes that there is scope for both the Washington Accord and/or the APEC Engineer Register (outlined further in Appendix A) to be used to facilitate the movement of professional engineers between Australia and Korea. Engineers Australia believes that the Australian government must seriously consider mechanisms within the FTA to include the Washington Accord and/or the APEC Engineer Register as the assessment framework for the recognition of university qualifications and the movement of professional engineers between Australia and Korea.

Overall, given that an assessment process already exists to recognise university qualifications under the Washington Accord and engineering registration/licensure internationally under the APEC Engineer Register, it would be extremely disappointing if DFAT failed to look for future opportunities to support these agreements.

While Engineers Australia has limited resources to devote to bilateral trade facilitation we would be willing to pursue opportunities to build a closer level of engagement with Korea under the FTA. We look forward to discussion on these issues as the FTA negotiations progress.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Hurford', written in a cursive style.

Kathryn Hurford
Associate Director, Policy

APPENDIX A: International Agreements

www.ieagreements.com

As a result of the work by Engineers Australia, accredited Australian qualifications and overseas engineering qualifications are recognised through formal agreements with engineering accreditation/registration/licensing bodies in other countries. While a number of agreements exist, those most relevant to Australia's relationship with Korea include:

Washington Accord

The Washington Accord was signed in 1989. It is an agreement between the bodies responsible for accrediting professional engineering degree programs in each of the signatory countries. Engineers Australia accredits the undergraduate engineering courses offered in Australia and is therefore the Australian signatory to the Washington Accord,

The Accord recognises the “substantial equivalence” of programs accredited in the signatory countries, and recommends that graduates of accredited programs in any of the signatory countries be recognised by the other countries as having met the academic requirements for entry into the practice of engineering. The Washington Accord covers professional engineering undergraduate degrees. Engineering technology and postgraduate-level programs are not covered by the Accord.

The signatory countries of the Washington Accord are: Australia, the United States, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong China, Ireland, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, and United Kingdom. Germany, Malaysia, India, Russia and Sri Lanka are currently provisional members of the Accord. Engineers Australia is also currently supporting an application for provisional membership by China.

APEC Engineer Register

The APEC Human Resources Development Working Group Steering Committee for mutual recognition of professional engineers developed the initiative for the APEC Engineer Register over the period 1997 – 1998. The intent of the APEC Engineer Register is to recognise the equivalencies in the qualifications and experience of practising professional engineers in the participating economies and to facilitate trade in engineering services between those participating economies.

The purpose of the agreement is that engineers entered on the APEC Engineer Register will be granted a high degree of mutual exemption from further assessment when practising in any of the participating economies: Australia, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. This is not yet occurring in all member economies.

An APEC Engineer is defined as a person who is recognised as a professional engineer within an APEC economy, and has satisfied an authorised body in that economy (for example Engineers Australia), operating in accordance with the criteria and procedures approved by the APEC Engineer Coordinating Committee, that they have:

- completed an accredited or recognised engineering program;
- been assessed within their own economy as eligible for independent practice;
- gained a minimum of seven years practical experience since graduation;
- spent at minimum of two years in responsible charge of significant engineering work; and
- maintained their continuing professional development at a satisfactory level.

All practitioners seeking registration, as APEC Engineers must also agree to be bound by the codes of professional conduct established and enforced by their home jurisdiction and by any other jurisdiction within which they are practising. Such codes normally include requirements that practitioners place the health, safety and welfare of the community above their responsibilities to clients and colleagues, practise only within their area of competence, and advise their clients when additional professional assistance becomes necessary in order to implement a program or project.

APEC Engineers must agree to be held individually accountable for their actions, both through requirements imposed by the licensing or registering body in the jurisdictions in which they work and through legal processes.

The APEC Engineer Register can also work as a framework for the development of bilateral mutual recognition agreements. This process has developed out of frustration that engineers entered on the APEC Engineer Register have not yet been granted a high degree of mutual exemption from further assessment when practising in any of the participating economies. Engineers Australia has successfully negotiated an MRA with Japan under the APEC Engineer Register framework.

Engineers Australia has also negotiated MRAs with Canada and the Texas Board of Professional Engineers separate to the APEC Engineer Register. More details can be provided on these negotiations and MRA outcomes if required.