

In reply please quote C1: DR

23 June 2005

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

**Re: Inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing**

Thank you for your letter dated 25 May 2005 concerning the above.

The Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Inc (the Council):

- was Incorporated in February 2002;
- is an entity consisting of Australian and New Zealand Chiropractic Registration Boards, professional Chiropractic Associations, Chiropractic educational Institutions and specialist laypersons;
- is responsible for undertaking accreditation of chiropractic programs within Australasia; and
- is responsible for undertaking skills assessment for migration to, and practice in Australia.

**1. Investigate and report on current arrangements for overseas skills recognition and associated issues of licensing and registration for:**

- Skills stream migrants who obtain assessment prior to migrating;
- Families of skill stream migrants, family stream migrants and humanitarian entrants who see assessment/registration/upgrading after arrival;
- Temporary residents who need skills assessment/recognition; and
- Australian citizens returning after significant time overseas, with overseas qualifications.

Council has adopted extensive processes and procedures for the purposes of overseas skills recognition. Prior to the formation of Council in 2002, the overseas skills recognition process was undertaken directly by the Chiropractors Registration Boards within Australia.

A brief overview of the processes and procedures is detailed below, however attached to the submission for your information is a copy of the Council's relevant skills assessment documentation.

Any person who has chiropractic qualifications gained outside of Australia or New Zealand, including Australian residents, who wish to practise chiropractic in Australia, must successfully complete a two-stage assessment process before being deemed eligible to apply for practice in Australia.

This two-stage process involves a paper-based desktop audit and a practical competency assessment. The paper-based desktop audit can be undertaken from the applicant's place of domicile however the practical competency assessment can only be undertaken in Australia.

**Stage 1 – Desktop Audit**

The Desktop Audit requires the applicant to provide the following:

- a completed application form requesting the following information:
  - personal details;
  - education details;

- experience details;
- licensing details;
- other assessment details;
- certified copies of educational qualifications, licensing certificates and other assessment details;
- two current references;
- the required fee.

## **Stage 2 – Practical Competency Assessment**

The Practical Competency Assessment involves the following three parts, of which exemptions are available:

- Part 1 - Written Basic Competency;
- Part 2 – Written Clinical Competency; and
- Part 3 – Practical Clinical Competency.

Candidates are required to successfully complete the Practical Competency Assessment to a current “entry level graduate” standard, with the assessment being designed to meet the competencies contained in the Competency Standards for Entry Level Chiropractors.

Council provides part exemptions based upon determined criteria related to international educational equivalence, therefore enabling some applicants the opportunity to forego either Part 1 or Parts 1 and 2 of the Practical Competency Assessment. All applicants are required to undertake Part 3.

Each Part of the Practical Competency Assessment takes approximately two hours to complete and can only be undertaken in Australia. The Council currently contracts the services of two chiropractic institutions to administer the Practical Competency Assessment on its behalf.

The Council offers the Practical Competency Assessment four times a year, with the following fees applying:

- \$800.00 for Part 1;
- \$800.00 for Part 2; and
- \$1800.00 for Part 3.

### ***Completion of Practical Competency Assessment***

Once an applicant has successfully completed the Practical Competency Assessment, the Council provides them with the following:

- a formal letter, based on current DIMIA templates, stating their suitability for migration and practise in Australia;
- a Certificate of Attainment which is recognised by all Chiropractors Registration Boards in Australia as eligibility to apply for practice.

As Council has no direct involvement with registration to practice, once applicants have received the above documentation, it has no further contact with them, therefore it does not hold statistics as to issues regarding families etc.

## ***2. Consider how Australia’s arrangements compare with those of other major immigration countries.***

Australian trained Chiropractors wishing to work in the United States, Canada or Great Britain are required to undertake a similar process to that described above. The Council has corresponded with relevant assessing entities in these countries and been advised of their requirements, standards and processes.

The Council is unaware of immigration requirements of countries not listed above.

**3. Identify areas where Australia's procedures can be improved including in terms of:**

- **Communication of processes to users;**
- **Efficiency of processes and elimination of barriers;**
- **Early identification and response to persons needing skills upgrading (e.g. bridging courses);**
- **Awareness and acceptance of recognised overseas qualifications by Australian employers;**
- **Achieving greater consistency in recognition of qualifications for occupational licensing by state and territory regulators;**
- **Alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition of overseas qualifications.**

The Council is currently establishing a marketing regime with equivalent bodies in the United States, Canada and Europe. Council maintains an up to date website, however feels that marketing by other relevant bodies, such as DIMIA, is very limited with respect to chiropractic. The Council has received feedback from applicants that they have found it difficult to find relevant migration information and codes with respect to chiropractic on the DIMIA website and in DIMIA written information.

The Council does feel that some consideration needs to be given to the entry status of applicants coming to sit the Practical Competency Assessment. The Council has received feedback that most applicants are required to enter Australia on a Visitor's Visa, when they feel they should be able to enter on a type of educational visa. The Council feels this is an issue that needs to be considered for both clarity and efficiency.

With respect to bridging courses, the Council is currently undertaking discussions with chiropractic institutions within Australia regarding the formation of chiropractic specific bridging courses for applicants. It is envisaged that these discussions may take some time given the complexities involved in establishing tailored programs and the current lack of relevant data.

The chiropractic profession within Australia has a long established awareness of overseas chiropractic qualifications and as such, most employers are not adverse to employing chiropractors who have gained qualifications from the United States, Canada and parts of Europe. On the other hand, the Australian Chiropractors Registration Boards, who are charged with licensing chiropractors, must ensure that chiropractors are safe and competent to practise to protect the public.

At present, the Council is of the opinion that all Chiropractors Registration Boards would be extremely reticent to have alternative approaches to skills assessment and recognition of overseas qualifications put in place. Given their responsibility to ensure public safety and their inability to assess and accredit overseas chiropractic programs, the Council has been advised that all Chiropractors Registration Boards would not feel comfortable with automatic recognition procedures for overseas trained chiropractors.

**Closing**

The Council is confident in the processes and procedures it currently has in place with respect to migration and practise responsibilities and feels that as such, protection of the Australian public is greatly enhanced by only allowing entry to those that are competent to practise.

The Council would like to thank you for offering it the opportunity to provide a submission and looks forward to receiving a copy of the report.

Yours sincerely



Chairperson

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*Attachment 1 – Desktop Audit Application Form*

*Attachment 2 – Competency Standards for Entry Level Chiropractors*

*Attachment 3 – Part 1 – Written Basic Competency example questions*

*Attachment 4 – Part 2 – Written Clinical Competency example questions*

*Attachment 5 – Candidate Guide*