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## ISSUES OF REGISTRATION

### Preliminary findings

#### **Australian Research Council Linkage Project**

Equity and diversity in the Australian architecture profession:  
women, work and leadership (2011–2014)

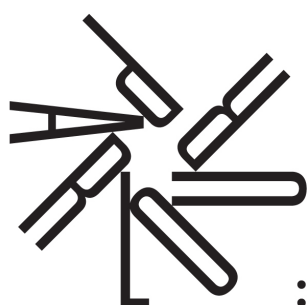
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December 2012



: women, equity, architecture.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides preliminary findings from two projects conducted within an Australian Research Council Linkage Project: *Equity and diversity in the Australian architecture profession: women, work and leadership* (2011–2014). The primary concern of this research is the position of women in the Australian architecture profession. The research reported here highlights that numerous process and perception issues surrounding registration, disproportionately impact women, and particularly those women who follow non-standard career paths.

The projects include an on-line survey of the experience of women associated with architecture, and primary research towards two case studies conducted in architecture firms. Both research methodologies reveal numerous perception issues among architectural practitioners surrounding the obtaining and maintaining of formal registration. These include varying views, some positive but the majority negative, on the benefits and value of registration. The amount of time required to obtain registration can be a disincentive, particularly for those with family responsibilities. This impacts women disproportionately compared to men. The amount of work required to obtain registration is also daunting to the participants in the research, although some who had successfully completed the process reported that it had been highly instructive and valuable. The costs of registration are perceived to be high relative to the benefits, which, given the known gender-based disparity in wages in architecture, could also have a disproportionate effect on women. Would-be registrants reported significant differences in the levels of support for registration provided by different architectural firms including, in some cases, active discouragement.

Research participants identified numerous issues with the administration of the registration process. These include state-by-state variations that cause problems for those wishing to move state, and also cause perverse effects such as registrants travelling interstate to locations where the examinations are perceived to be easier and/or more fair. The process of changing from non-practising to practising is also seen to be difficult and lacking in clarity. Those with international qualifications have considerable difficulty with registration due to the time and cost of accrediting those qualifications.

Research participants perceived issues with the subject matters assessed during the formal registration examinations, and with the way that the assessment is carried out. Some recommended that the assessment be more closely aligned with current architectural practice, and with greater relevance to employees in specialist and/or large practices. There were also perceptions that the examination process can be inconsistent, subjective and not always fair. This is compounded by insufficient feedback systems and mentoring for those who fail. One significant finding is that ‘the longer you leave it the harder it is’; a perception that experience is a liability rather than as asset. This opens fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the registration process in fulfilling its role in consumer protection. It is also notable that senior architects find the registration process particularly daunting, both because they must undertake the process in the company of those many years junior to themselves (in some cases their own employees or students), and also because they face professional loss of face if they are unsuccessful.

## INTRODUCTION

This research is being conducted as part of an Australian Research Council Linkage Project: *Equity and diversity in the Australian architecture profession: women, work and leadership* (2011–2014).<sup>1</sup> The overall aims of the project are to:

- identify actual and perceived barriers to women architects' promotion and progression in the industry
- identify examples of good employment practice in architecture
- understand the ways that gender is a factor in structuring professional identity and aspirations in architecture
- explain how gendered behaviours particular to the profession are reproduced and reconfigured within specific workplaces
- examine the impact of women's participation on practice and innovation in architecture
- better understand the social, economic, and architectural advantages of a gender-diverse workforce.

The project consists of a number of sub-projects including a literature review, mapping of the participation of women in architecture, within-firm case study research, a scan of equity policies with the view of informing future policy, and a visual anthropology. The research project has an associated website: *Parlour: women, equity, architecture*, at [www.archiparlour.org](http://www.archiparlour.org).

This report provides some preliminary findings and observations relating to the registration of architects and the process of registration, which have been gathered from two parts of the project: an online survey conducted through the *Parlour* website, and the case studies. Quotes have been edited in order to de-identify participants in the research.

Registration is a matter of interest for the project since our research, to date, has established that women constitute:

- 21% of registered architects in 2012<sup>2</sup>
- more than 40% of graduates from architecture schools for at least the past two decades<sup>3</sup>
- 32% of new registrants averaged for the years 2007–2011<sup>4</sup>.

This marked under-representation of women throughout the registration process is problematic and requires further research and action.

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<sup>1</sup> The original research team for this project included the current Chair of the Board of Architects Queensland, Professor Susan Savage; however, Professor Savage has since left the project and has had no involvement in this research or report.

<sup>2</sup> Gill Matthewson, 'The Numbers so Far', *Parlour: women, equity, architecture*., <http://www.archiparlour.org/the-numbers-so-far/>

<sup>3</sup> Matthewson, 'The Numbers so Far'.

<sup>4</sup> Matthewson, 'The Numbers so Far'.

## PART ONE: 'WHERE DO ALL THE WOMEN GO?' SURVEY

### Information about the survey

The primary aim of the survey was to gain a greater understanding of women's participation in, and engagement with, the field of architecture in Australia. The survey contains 96 questions in total. As well as collecting demographic information, the survey sought information on women's experience of working in architecture, their career aspirations, and some insight into why women leave the field. The survey opened on 2 July 2012. Full details of the administration of the survey, the survey instrument, and other preliminary findings can be found in *Where do all the women go? Technical report and preliminary statistics*, on the *Parlour* website.

At the time of writing, another survey is being conducted; this time to gather information from men.

The survey *Where do all the women go?* was completed by 1267 women. Since the respondents were not a random sample, it is not possible to draw from the survey, general inferences for all women in architecture. The majority (94%) of the respondents lived in Australia. Age, geographic distribution, and employment areas of respondents were as follows:



## Preliminary analysis of questions relating to registration

This section contains a preliminary analysis of nine questions from the survey, aimed at discovering women's participation in, and perceptions and experience of, registration as an architect. Reports on the experience of registration are also contained in questions relating to career and other open questions. Please note that this analysis does not take into account differences between state registration processes.

Q37. Are you a registered architect in Australia?		
Label	Count	Percent
Yes	558	45.1
Yes — non practising or retired	52	4.2
No	627	50.7

The following questions, Q38 and Q39, were answered by the 610 respondents who answered 'yes' or 'yes — non practising or retired' to Q37.

Q38. What year did you register?		
Answer Options	Count	Percent
1960–1969	6	1.0
1970–1979	13	2.1
1980–1989	51	8.4
1990–1999	140	23.0
2000–2009	267	43.8
2010–2012	125	20.5
No answer	8	1.3

Q39. Which states are you registered in?	
Answer Options	Count
Northern Territory	7
New South Wales	177
Victoria	270
Queensland	107
South Australia	34
Western Australia	43
Tasmania	12

Q40 Answered by all.

Q40. Are you registered as an architect in another country? If yes, please tell us which country.		
Answer Options	Count	Percent
Not registered elsewhere	922	74.5
New Zealand	5	0.4
United Kingdom	22	1.8
United States	2	0.2
Other	22	1.8
No answer	264	21.3

Q41. If you are not currently registered in Australia, have you been registered here in the past?	
Answer Options	Count
Yes	20
No	616

Q42. If you have been registered, why did you let your registration lapse? (Please tick all that apply.)	
Answer Options	Count
My current work means I no longer need to be registered	13
I have been unable to meet continuing professional development requirements	1
I am not currently resident in Australia	4
I am taking a break from architecture	9
Other	23

In Q42, Respondents were provided with a choice of categories (see table above). Forty-one respondents choose to use the 'other' section to provide a reason or to write a comment. From these comments it would appear that there is some confusion about whether 'registration lapse' means moving to the non-practising category of the register (available in some but not all states) or forsaking registration altogether. The greatest cluster of answers in the 'other' section can be classified under breaks in working life as an architect in Australia. These included geographic mobility (3), unemployment (3) and maternity/family leave (11). Examples of the responses are:

- *I travelled and worked overseas for 8 years and then became a mother.*
- *I have previously let my registration lapse for a period of 4 years whilst on 'family leave' from practice.*
- *I had a child and could not keep up with my professional development*
- *Haven't got around to doing it since coming to Australia – don't imagine that it will make a huge difference to my career at this time – it is on my 'things to do' list though.*

- *I only re-registered this year after an extended break as 'non-practicing' – I could not afford the compulsory PI insurance and therefore could no longer call myself an 'architect' – something I felt quite bitter about!* [3 comments identified insurance costs as the reason for registration lapsing].
- *After registration, I spent some time out of the architecture profession... and changed category of registration to "non-practicing". When I returned to architecture 8 years later, I was able to change the registration to practicing. This is a really important aspect / flexibility, to do this with registration.*

Q43. If you have never registered, why not? (Please tick all that apply.)	
Answer Options	Count
I don't need registration to work in the way I do	209
I could not obtain the requisite experience	45
I did not obtain the requisite experience	60
It is too difficult	38
It takes too long	40
It is too expensive	72
The time commitment is too onerous with my other commitments	100
My qualifications are too long ago	24
I haven't got around to doing it	166
Other	183

In response to Q43, as well as the categories above, 183 respondents chose the 'other' section to provide a reason for not having registered, or to write comments. The 'other' responses included students, recent graduates not yet eligible to register, those currently in the process of obtaining registration (25), and some persons who worked within 'architecture' more broadly described and who did not have the basic qualifications necessary to pursue registration. The largest set of 'other' responses outside this group related to the examination process. Some key themes of these responses are highlighted below.

The first theme was the difficulty in registering faced by those with overseas qualifications (13 comments). For example, the following responses:

- *My overseas degree needs to be recognized first, which is a very expensive and lengthy process*
- *As I obtained my degree overseas, the registration board will have to assess my qualifications in order to advise me whether I'm eligible to be registered. While it would be impossible to get together all my projects I've ever done in uni, this process of the assessment is also very expensive. Should the board deem my qualifications not to be the same as in Australia, I would have wasted all this money. The registration process in general is expensive enough.*
- *My degree is foreign and so I need to get it accredited before I can start the registration process, but I don't have any of my university work anymore, so cannot get my degree accredited.*



- *Although I don't need registration to work in the way I do, I would have considered registering if I didn't consider the process so 'over the top' (laborious, expensive, etc) for someone who was previously registered in another country – a registration which carried weight in other countries, but carries no weight in Australia, which is annoying. And a bit offensive, if I'm going to be completely honest about it...*

Related to the above was one respondent with Australian qualifications but overseas experience:

- *I returned to Australia a few years ago and it was a long, tedious and expensive process to get registered in Australia. It took 3-years! I was treated like a foreign alien despite having studied here and being registered in UK (similar contracts).*

The second theme was the difficulties presented by the cost and by obtaining the necessary experience, particularly if that experience was within larger firms and on larger projects. For example:

- *Most of my post-graduation experience is in design and design development of large projects (both buildings and urban design) I haven't ever had to take on Contract Admin responsibilities which would be necessary to get registered.*
- *The registration exam is mostly designed for small practice architects with a focus on contract admin. Early in my career I worked in large practices on complex projects and then I moved into urban design. I could technically pass the exam, but know from other friends' experience that my parallel path is not seen to be adequate experience, even though I [held a very senior position] in a large architectural practice.*
- *The exam and interview are somewhat daunting. Process is lengthy and requires heavy time commitment as well as broad thorough knowledge. Cost after completing a Masters is also quite heavy.*

The third theme was raised by those who simply could not see the benefit in being registered:

- *It's a long arduous process with not much benefit to me. My clients don't seem to know (or care – as I have explained on numerous occasions that I'm not a registered architect) the difference.*
- *I have passed architectural registration exam, but due to cost of maintaining registration, no requirement for my job and seeing no benefits, I have not actually registered.*
- *The Registration and Insurance would be huge burdens for zero benefit in my 'work' scene.*

A fourth group, who had never been registered, had attempted to register but had been unsuccessful. Some of this group reported uncertainty as to why they had failed:

- *I have sat the exam twice and not passed. I attended the AIA run PALS course, had a study group, obtained practice exams and sought assistance from registered colleagues. I also have many years of relevant practical experience. It has been very difficult for me to ascertain how I can sit the exam and pass, feedback from the board is very brief and unhelpful. My employer and other experienced architects are similarly perplexed as to why I have failed the exam twice.*

Finally, a number of respondents took the opportunity to express their disillusionment with the profession and its opportunities. Examples include:

- *I did not end up completing the second degree in Architecture. I found myself losing patience with the length of gaining education in the final degree. I was working in Architectural Practices and became frustrated with the low wages and length of hours required to get ahead. For this reason I decided to take a step sideways and get into the interior architecture / design side. Pay and career prospects seemed better.*
- *By the end of my degree I already felt out of touch with the field. Architectural work did not pay enough to survive on (without youth allowance etc – which I did not qualify for as partner earned too much). So I had stopped working in the field after my work experience. My peers continued, so I felt out of date / touch/ lost my confidence. When I was offered another (unrelated) role it seemed like a good opportunity. I still like the idea of becoming registered, but in reality I will probably never regain the confidence needed, and I also hope to start a family soon...*

#### **Q44. Are you registered in a profession other than architecture? If so, which profession?**

In response to Q44, twenty-eight positive answers were cited across a range of disciplines (most of which were allied to building and construction).

### **Themes emerging from Q45 – an open question related to registration**

#### **Q45. Do you have any further comments about registration and the registration process?**

In response to Q45, three hundred and seventy-six respondents elected to write comments, and many of these were quite lengthy. What is presented here is a summary of the major themes that emerged. The responses will be subject to further analysis. Many of the responses covered issues that were raised in responses to Q42 and Q43, including: the cost, the difficulty of gaining recognition for overseas qualifications, and the relevance or necessity for registration, to work within architecture.

The large number of responses provided an extremely rich and varied account of the registration process, and a range of opinions around its effectiveness. The main themes that emerged from the answers are highlighted below. Other areas of comment included: the blurred boundaries between professional groups, the need for registration in allied disciplines such as landscape architecture, and the employer's role and obligations.

#### **Work and family**

One of the key themes raised, is the difficulty of balancing fulfilment of the requirements of becoming and staying registered, with family responsibilities including career interruptions to care for family — 28 comments. The quotes below provide examples of some of the difficulties that were mentioned.

- *It is quite difficult to achieve if you haven't completed [registration] before having children (I wish I knew this BEFORE having children!!). Now I am unsure how will accumulate enough hours again to have the required hours for my log book. In addition, the cost is quite prohibitive. If you are not employed somewhere you have to pay without any assistance. However once my children are older maybe I won't be so time poor. However at this stage I can't see it happening for a while.*

- *I would love to become registered when children have left home and money is not such an issue as I am the primary income earner in our family. Time commitments with children's activities and the associated costs in travelling away to gain the required PD points is not feasible for me.*
- *The process of re-registering I feel is discriminatory as it does not recognise the need for a/several period/s in one's professional life, to take 'family' leave to have children, to care for aging/sick family, etc., especially if one is intending to return to practice once family commitments have been resolved/attended to. Currently returning to practice (after a period of 1-2yrs – sorry not sure of exact allowable time frame) entails going through a re-approval process which is lengthy, difficult, costly, etc. I feel one is penalised for having to &/or electing to take extended family leave.*
- *It was very frustrating after years of study, working in the profession and registration to then be unable to call myself an architect. I could not justify the ongoing PI insurance and other overheads when I took time off to care for my children and was only working from home, part-time on small projects. I felt very alienated from the profession and considered not re-registering at all.*

We note however this single and quite different response received as part of the responses to Q45:

- *Just to balance those other ladies that might answer how this would clash with the child bearing years after a long degree. It took resolve but I did it – that's the deal though – raise the kids, get experience, get registered, undertake further studies, work hard and be tired and see amazing career opportunities emerge. Don't sit back I say!*

The difficulties relating to balancing work and family commitments are summed-up well in the following response.

- *I think this is possibly one of the biggest issues for women. They need to leave Uni and focus on registration in the first 5 years. Without this it gets tricky. Balancing family life and a part time career does not allow for registration easily and you cannot underestimate the impact of sleep deprivation in the early years. I think there is a loss of confidence and a lack of opportunity for women as they re-enter the workforce and a general feeling that the horse has bolted and they have missed the chance to register. For me personally it is more and more difficult as the more senior I become the more my job is removed from the types of issues focused on for registration. I am not involved in the day to day running of projects as much as I am running the big picture of the practice. Another road block.*

### **Gender and discrimination issues**

There were a small number of respondents (20) who perceived overt sexism or discrimination within the registration processes. Comments included the following:

- *I think it privileges a masculine ideal or practice of architecture.*
- *I do feel that I would need to work harder to prove that I am worthy of registration. Primarily during the interview process.*
- *I hope that in future more women can be on the panel for the registration exam.*
- *The fees are too expensive! Women are poorly remunerated in Australia. The profession has a very male dominated culture and attitude that has no respect for women in Architecture or "gender equality" in Australia. I cannot see this improving in the profession for women in my lifetime! It is disgraceful and unacceptable.*

- *The interview was sexist. The bloke kept saying 'good girl' which apart from being absurd was inaccurate since at 44 I was no longer a girl and never particularly good.*
- *I had the most awful interview for my registration. One of the examiners actually said that if I made a mistake on site I could "ring my daddy and cry and get him to pay for it." It was completely unprofessional and inappropriate. I requested another interview, which was much better. ... Interestingly several people at the time advised me not to complain, that I'd be in trouble and would suffer in trying to get future work. My response was that if I couldn't work as a result of such a basic complaint I had no interest in the profession. I never got an apology or explanation, but at least I got another interview.*

### The experience of the process of registration

The responses revealed a range of experiences with the registration process, and over 183 comments related to this theme. Variations across geographic areas or time (the period in which the experience took place) are not captured here. Further research could be conducted on whether women's experiences have improved in recent years. Although the responses were mainly on the negative side, there were also positive responses (28). Examples of the positive responses appear below.

- *It was easier than expected!*
- *Essential, good professional development opportunity, not as hard as portrayed. Great that after all the study and hard work you finally get the title of architect. Also, even though you never stop learning, attaining registration feels like closure on formative years in architecture.*
- *For me, registration was the logic next step after graduation. I started filling in my logbook pretty much the day after graduation and kept a log of all the work hours. I hear lots of stories about how difficult the registration is, I am not saying that the process was easy, but with focus and a set mind, it wasn't too hard!*

Numerous responses; however, gave negative accounts of the experience of registration. Some examples of these are provided below.

- *My logbook failed on a technicality, while I see less experienced and less competent people passing. I understand the process needs to be rigorous, however instead of immediately re-attempting Registration, I decided to focus on actually completing projects and learning skills at work, rather than trying to convince someone else I have skills and experience.*
- *It was a demeaning process for a young architect – in particular the interview process. We understand well enough that opportunities are limited for young architects and also as a young architect working in an office it's difficult to gain extensive experience in contract admin, etc. However, after a 6 year degree, years of working in a range of offices and having run large projects as project architect at a young age, it felt like a punishing/condescending experience rather than a professional experience. I do not disagree with Registration and understand the value of having a rigorous process in order to become a recognised professional – but it was not an experience that helped build any professional character. It felt like a school test and probably isn't even effective in separating the good and the bad architects out there!*
- *The process borders on extortion because even though a large number of persons before you would have had exactly the same overseas degree as you 'scrutinized' for validity (from the same University and the same time period), each application to the accreditation council requires a large sum of money to be paid, over and over again.*

Respondents also revealed their strong perception that seeking registration would be a difficult and distressing experience (73 comments). What emerged from the data was that the *perceived* difficulty of the process established through hearing of others' experience, combined with a lack of support from employers (15 comments), cost (62 comments), and difficulties in gaining the necessary experience (20 comments), meant that a large number of those who responded would not be seeking registration. Examples of this issue are illustrated in the following quotes.

- *It is very long, tedious and expensive.*
- *Registration seems not to be about design quality, rather about professional indemnity insurance. As a result, it does not interest me.*
- *From what I've heard it is extremely laborious to uphold.*
- *My work isn't willing to let me study and work on the things I would need to get registered. It was also mentioned / inferred that if I was registered I would need to be paid more and may not fit into the current team*
- *The process should be much closer related to the professional degree. It needs to be better promoted in the industry. I was met with negativity for doing it when I was full-time employed for a practice. They did not think it had any value in it for them! They also did not financially recognize my step to become a registered architect. It was actually the reason I left the practice.*
- *A close friend of mine got first class honours in architecture at university. He sat the written exam multiple times and the final time that he passed, he had decided not to study at all as the pressure was getting to him! Relieved to have passed, he then sat the interview where one of the interviewers knew him (which I understand is not allowed to happen but did) and was asking him questions about projects that were not logged in his logbook, and after an interview for OVER an hour, he then got a letter saying he had failed and he needed to wait a year to re-sit it. He has now stopped working in an architecture firm because of this and I think that the system really needs to be relooked at, as I know quite a few incompetent people that actually got through first time.*
- *The fact that you have to complete an exhaustive logbook, then sit the practice exam, and THEN undertake an oral exam (which I have heard can be either a short conversation or a complete interrogation depending upon who you get...) is too much time and expense for me to commit to.*
- *I had applied for registration when the legal requirements for apartment design were changing to require a registered architect as designer. The practice had been doing a lot of both urban design work and apartment design. However, I had not been involved in contract admin largely because the size of projects & size of our practice generally resulted in either a project manager being appointed during construction or clients developing their projects directly with their builder. Lack of contract admin was cited as grounds for refusal of my application. I have extensive multiple-housing design, urban design, & peer review experience in a highly respected practice but still have not been directly involved in contract admin.*

### **Efficacy and relevance of registration process**

There was a high degree of scepticism among respondents, about whether the process of registration adequately tests what is required to be a competent architect, or whether it represents anything meaningful once achieved. This was expressed in more than 78 responses, including the following:

- *People I know made up stuff in their logbooks and just because they are good at studying the facts and regurgitating them, DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE COMPETENT AT THEIR JOB*

[emphasis in the original]. *This seriously needs to be looked at, as registration is often considered a bit of a joke once you get through.*

- *I have found over 10 years in my office that the system of registration has not been any indication of the skills or competency of the employees. We have had employees who are not capable of running a small project let alone a business become registered on their first attempt and then others who are exceptionally well-rounded in the profession fail their registration on numerous occasions. I would previously have expected a registered architect to have at the very least a competent grasp of the profession, but at this point in my career and my office, I don't see the system of registration having any bearing on the skills and competency of a graduate.*
- *[Registration is] Totally unnecessary for this field. All works being assessed by Government authorities in respect to health, safety and construction. Provided you abide with BCA, AS and Council DCP & LEP and others this is what determines your approval not registration.*
- *Several excellent people I know, particularly a number of women, who are in effect practicing as architects have attempted to register and failed the exams. This is very disappointing and only serves to limit their careers, rather than control who practices architecture. They remain in their roles in firms, but do not attain the financial and other benefits of being registered. It seems to me that the registration process is far too difficult and bears only slim relationship to what people actually do as architects in practice.*
- *The registration process seems poorly structured and disassociated completely from realities of the work place.*
- *I want to become a registered architect for my own sense of self respect, and according to the recent salary survey, you do get paid more if you're registered. But the complexity and difficulty of registering as an architect seems a little hard to justify in purely practical terms when (in Victoria at least) the draftsperson registration process is faster and easier, but they can legally do exactly the same work with that registration as an architect.*
- *I found the examination process in AU (compared to UK) whimsical, inconsistent and subjective. In the UK I had to do an in depth course and sit numerous examinations which really tested my knowledge (and I learnt a lot). Here there seems to be a formula passed around to those 'in the know' which includes answers/past exams/etc.*
- *Getting registered doesn't seem to mean much. It hasn't resulted in a pay increase or access to different types of work, for example. When lawyers pass the bar, it seems like quite a big deal. Why is it not the same for architects?*
- *I think the assessment of professional developments for ongoing registration is a complete scam as it stands... it's generated predominantly from those who have things to sell and is topped up 'from an establishment within'... You can't make people grow this way... it is narrow and doesn't fully allow for the plurality of life that, particularly women, participate in, and really learn about architecture from in a myriad of ways.*
- *Architecture registration is surrounded by mystery and accessing information is convoluted and difficult.*

The written exam within the registration process received particular criticism:

- *The test is in my opinion not a great way of testing your competency as an architect – it seems as though it is trying to trick you through wording of the questions.*
- *Looking at past exams, the questions seem more interested in testing English comprehension skills and semantics, than actually testing your architectural capability.*

- *The examination conditions are ridiculous and completely oppositional to supporting the professional development of architects. Negative marking, the absence of correct answers to assist in future studying, pathetic feedback about 'problem areas,' and the style and content of some questions is appalling.*
- *The APE Exam is based on very unrealistic scenarios – where you have to learn how to answer the question rather than understand real world situations.*

In one case a practitioner who had successfully registered, wished that they had not:

- *In many ways I wish I had never registered. The board seems to be (expensively and inefficiently) run by a group of old-school-tie men and lawyers, largely to suit themselves. Being registered, along with the now compulsory and therefore very expensive PI insurance is prohibitively expensive and in effect restrictive. Many sole operators cannot afford to work as an architect as a result.*

The above views, however, must be balanced with the views of those (27) who found the process useful and relevant. For example:

- *Registering was a better process than I expected. Prior to registering I thought it was a waste of time – I already had a degree, why should I have to do more? But I found the study required really useful to what I do day to day and am glad I didn't delay it any longer.*
- *Tough but worth doing, I couldn't do what I am doing without it.*
- *I thought the registration process for me was a valuable addition to my university qualifications. It gave the real world grounding to my practice of architecture. It helped me to focus on the 'risk' side to practice and sharpened my project administration skills which are not acquired at university.*
- *The process made me more committed to the profession. It was fair and I was especially impressed with the interview part. The two colleagues that interviewed were encouraging and supportive. It was a good experience for a young architect like myself to feel supported by the profession.*
- *I found the process of attaining my registration extremely worthwhile, not because of any instant financial gain, or immediate increased responsibility, but because of a more complete understanding of the profession, and an increase in personal confidence. This then led to an increase in salary and responsibility in the workplace. On a more superficial level, I enjoy being able to call myself an architect.*

### **Location difficulties**

Some 13 respondents raised issues related to the fact that each Australian state has a different governing Act for architects' registration:

- *It would be much easier if there was national registration rather than individual state registrations especially for those who live near borders. It is also not very straightforward to transfer between states – I had to be 'practising' in the State where I was registered in order to transfer to 'practising' status in my new State. I had to explain that as I had returned from overseas travel, I was non-practising status, and could not return to practising status without a job and PI Insurance. It took many phone calls and then a 2 step process for registration in my new State: registration as 'non-practising' architect first (so they could transfer my current status over) then upgrade to practising, I also had to pay for these two parts separately.*

- *I gave up wanting to be registered, after my failure in the oral exam, because I felt they were a parochial, narrow-minded, insular boys club. I know it was not lack of knowledge that caused my failure. Since then I have talked to other registered architects from this area and found that they had a similar experience when they tried to gain registration in Qld. They then went the extra distance and sat their exam in Sydney and passed with flying colours.*
- *From my experience attitudes toward registration and how long it should take to gain the relevant experience vary from practice to practice. I worked in a practice (in Queensland) in my year out where it was common to be registered within a year or so of graduating, opportunities were handed out accordingly. In my current workplace (in Victoria), however, it is believed that it should take 3 years or more before even considering. The opportunities I am being given reflect this attitude and I feel very little support. Ability to register is heavily reliant on the opportunities the individual practice will give – it is not a fair playing field in this respect.*

For those not based near urban centres, different difficulties arose:

- *I find myself in a nameless limbo, despite qualifications and experience. In a small rural practice in a poor area where clients can't afford the full range of architectural services, the practitioner cannot get the range of experience required to be registered. I see registration as a luxury.*
- *It was difficult to complete as a regional Victorian, so much is geared towards Melbourne and there is little support for surrounding areas*

## Suggestions

A number of respondents had suggestions for how to improve the process:

- *I have tried twice to pass the exam without success, while working for another firm, so my confidence is shot in attempting again that exam. I would love to know how close I was – be able to examine where I went wrong and work with a mentor to correct the problems.*
- *I would like to see registration develop to be more reflective of the many different types of architects that work in our industry. Contract administration and the work of a sole practice residential architect seems to be the main focus of registration. Contract administration opportunities are becoming rare.*
- *When I first got a job, I got my log book and thought I'd get started. I quickly found that the experience I was starting with didn't even fit within the scope seen to be the experience required for registration. This was an initial setback that made me feel that this process wasn't tailored to the reality of building the right kind of experience. Reality is that there are many different things that one could do professionally that could be considered as part of your logged experience to becoming the best kind of architect.*
- *Strategic advice from the institute on how to both work and achieve registration would help; help desk at the institute to assist in what is required; pressure by the institute on the architectural offices where the graduates are working that they should assist/encourage registration; equal pay scales for all graduates that achieve registration?*
- *The profession has no responsibility to assist graduates in becoming registered. I think the onus should be on employers to provide a range of experience for young graduates. In some of the mandatory elements you are only required to have a minimum of hours - e.g. 30 over two years. I think it should be compulsory that employers who are institute members provide you with these 30 hours over a two year employment.*



## PART TWO: CASE STUDY RESEARCH

### Case study background

There are three architecture practices associated with the project and these are the subjects of case study investigation. They are medium to large sized practices, as these have been under-researched in the past. At the time of writing, two of the case studies have been conducted. Both firms are supportive of employees registering: paying for the courses, the examination fees, and ongoing yearly costs. In these firms, internal study groups are set up and senior staff mentor would-be registrants. One firm has recently introduced a policy whereby promotions are conditional upon registration, although this has not yet been tested.

The information gathered from the case studies is at a preliminary stage of analysis. Initial data analysis shows a gender differential within the offices, with a lower proportion of women registered than men. In the first case study 47 percent of the women and 58 percent of the men were registered. In the second case study the figures were 37 percent of the women and 51 percent of the men. However, a significant determining factor was whether someone was internationally trained — a third of the architectural staff in one of the case studies were internationals, and over 20 percent in the other.

### Interview analysis

In-depth interviews were conducted in the case study offices, with men and women. In addition, all employees with four or more years post graduation from an architecture degree that were not registered, were asked why not. Interviewees reflected on their whole career experience, including experiences with their current and previous employers. The issues reported were similar to those identified in the *Parlour* survey (noted in Part One), and include the following:

#### Relevance to current practice

Case study participants reflected the view that not being registered is not an impairment to practice, or to career progression (depending on the firm's structure and ethos, which varies hugely within the profession). The following quoted examples illustrate this view:

- *Truth to tell I don't need it for what I do. I'm mainly on the front end of jobs up to DA and then hand them over. I don't have much documentation and site experience. I don't need it for my day to day but will need it for promotion kind of thing, I think. [Male grad 6–10 years]*
- *They [the firm] paid for the training courses too, which is good. I wouldn't have got that over where I was before, there wasn't much encouragement [to register at my last firm]. I think there might be five registered architects in eighty people [there]. [Male grad 11–15 years]*
- *It wasn't something that held me back career-wise because you don't need to be a registered Architect to practice in a large organisation... So from day one when I first came here, it didn't affect me getting a job and it still doesn't affect my performance at my job. I'm not saying that it's not a good idea for me to become registered, but I'm saying that it's something that hasn't affected me in a negative way which is probably more the reason I haven't than anything else... I don't think there's anything I'd do differently. Even in the legal terms of signing documents within the firm, we*

*only have [a couple] who are registered Architects and who are the nominated ones... who are the only people who sign the documents because you don't have the rest of the staff putting their name forward for legal reasons. [Male international grad >15 years]*

There was a perception among case study participants that registration is mainly set up for sole practitioners:

- *I actually sat it four years ago and failed the interview. The assessors kept asking questions about running small projects and my experience had been large projects particularly structural and services coordination for high rise. They said that the process was for people wanting to run their own firm and my experience was always working in teams... I ask myself, what is a definition of architecture for me? Does registration add to that? At the moment the answer is: no. [male grad 11–15 years]*
- *I tried to get it [registration] out of the way as soon as possible. I think probably three years... because you have got to get that experience across the board. It's not necessarily [valuable being registered]. It's nice to call yourself an architect, that personal satisfaction that you are complete and you are now an architect – because I don't know what I would say to people if I wasn't... But once you are an architect, I would probably say "no". You are doing everything else, the same people can do exactly the same things. It would only be if you have your own business. [Male registered grad 11–15 years]*

There was also a perception that the registration process assesses 'all-roundedness', whereas in fact the profession is increasingly specialised:

- *[I am] Not registered. I got frustrated and annoyed with the logbook. Registration measures all roundedness, and architecture is full of specialisations these days. And it deals with the kind of contracts that are seldom used these days so it's a bit archaic really. [Male grad >15 years]*
- *I'm actually about to do my interview. I do want to fulfil that, even though I do not need it for the work I'm doing. It's just something I would like to complete. Yeah, hopefully I'll get it. I'm a bit worried because it's a traditional... that registration process assumes and usually is, weighs you according to a certain way of working in an architecture firm. They ask you about contracts which actually hardly anybody uses these days or only for very small jobs. [Female grad 6–10 years]*

Interviewees indicated that the benefits of registration are poorly understood.

- *I'm planning to do it next year. What value is it to be registered? To be honest I don't know. Maybe I'll be more recognised in the firm as an architect... I really don't know. [Male grad 2–5 years]*
- *I think that people don't understand registration very well. For me, it gives me the confidence to go on site in particular, and it gives the company confidence in me. [Female registered, grad 6–10 years]*
- *I was given a promotion without being asked, and then I was told that as part of the deal you have to go through the process of registration. But I've never seen any value in it. Personally I think the whole industry should be thoroughly deregulated rather than regulated... So it's never attracted me... I suppose more in a principle thing, there should be regulation if that confers some sort of benefit to society. And protecting a name and a name alone is not enough, that's just paperwork. [Male grad 11–15 years]*
- Q So why did you end up registering and why did you delay it so long?

*A: Just laziness really. I think you can make all kind of excuses, but it is an ordeal to go through the registration process and I just always found a reason why it wouldn't be this year and why this year wouldn't be the right year because, you know, it's easy to find an excuse to put it off... But it was good. It was very worthwhile and I should have done it before. Now I'm actually taking the lead in getting other people in the practice registered, so I... try to encourage people to do it. [Male registered 3 years, grad 11–15 years]*

- *But this is the thing, it's not an impairment to practicing, so why do it? Like I am registered and I kind of did it just to put a full stop at the end of everything, but there was no real reason for me to do it. But I think having gone through the 10 week PALS course that I did, I actually learnt heaps and I found it very valuable. But going into it I didn't think there was that much reason to do it... Like I think I came out of it with quite a lot of understanding, but that wasn't the impetus to do it. And I think with a lot of people, you kind of don't know what you don't know. So they're kind of thinking: they're working, they're managing to make everything happen without doing it. So they think: well, it's all working, why do I need it? It's not necessarily promoted I think clearly and well enough what you get from it. [Female registered, grad 11–15 years]*
- *[I wanted to register] because I was starting to take responsibilities on-site for projects and I wanted to understand a lot more of the issues that were more prevalent to the client and to the project manager about the project and the legal implications and the liabilities that I was taking on for the practice. I wanted to understand that... I am pleased I did it. A lot of my girlfriends who are architects, I can't say all of them did it. I think there's a lot of people who couldn't see the benefits of being registered. [Female registered, grad >15 years]*
- *It's not a great deal of benefit in the circumstances, given what I would have to do to get it. [Female international grad >15 years]*
- *Now the new generation of young architects seem to be more interested in getting registered... who value themselves and the nature of architecture or the role of the architect... [A role] that in some ways I see as maybe weakening a bit because we've been taken out of the construction administration process. So it's this kind of re-defining yourself... I think that's the kind of drive behind getting registered... it's taking back a bit of personal power really. [Female grad 2–5 years]*

### Administrative issues

Case study participants consider the cost for the courses and the registration process an issue. This includes ongoing fees, insurance costs and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

- *It's not worth it for me at the moment. It's all very expensive. You register and then you have to pay for the insurance as well. It's worth it if you have a good private practice but at the moment I don't need to. [Male grad 11–15 years]*

Those with overseas qualifications have another layer of cost and time which becomes prohibitive.

- *I'm not Australian so I have all the hassle of getting my qualifications approved. Costs a couple of thousand dollars and takes about a year and I just haven't had that kind of money. Not being registered hasn't negatively affected my career. [Female international grad >15 years]*
- *I'm registered in Germany actually but it doesn't count here. I have to get my degree assessed and they want to see my student portfolio of work. Well, that's all paper not digital. Too much of a hassle. Still, I'll have to get around to it. I have residency now so it's the next step. [Male internationally registered, grad >10 years]*

- *Maybe three years ago... [the firm said that], “we want you to get registered and we will help and support you to get registered” – a few of us Germans actually looked into it and one of our colleagues from Germany, he actually did it. The problem about it is that the process before you can actually get registered (and go through that quite laborious process) is for the German Masters to get evaluated and then accredited. It’s just such a huge process and it’s very costly. So one of my colleagues who has done it, well altogether, this is about... three years ago or something, he paid like \$6,000 additional to the costs that are the normal registration... So I’m not thinking about it anymore. [Female international grad 6–10 years]*
- *I’m registered in the UK. I’ve been put off doing in Australia: it costs \$1500 to verify I’m registered and I need an interview. That’s ok and what I would expect – although \$1500 to verify me seems steep. But they also want to see my student work(!) and that seems totally wrong because I couldn’t be UK registered without the appropriate education. Puts me right off. [Male internationally registered, grad 6–10 years]*
- *I’m registered in Italy but not here. My immigration adviser reckoned architecture is the most expensive profession for recognition of qualifications. [Female internationally registered, grad 6–10 years]*

There were different perceptions about what is ‘appropriate experience’. Some interviewees said they had waited until they felt they had all the boxes ticked and others sat for registration as soon as possible.

- *I think people get a bit scared of the notion of experience or the required level and they ought not. [Male internationally registered, grad 11–15 years]*
- *I intend to. I think it’s a good for career progression and it’s a good idea to be aware of the legal issues. I’ve delayed until I’ve got all round experience. I’m very proud to be an architect and so want to be able to officially call myself one. [Female grad 2–5 years]*
- *Some people do it sooner than others. It’s how you look at it. You can learn by book or you might want to wait until you really had the experience. To be honest I’m only just now ready, I could have possibly done it last year, but it’s only now that I feel like I could. And even then it’s hard... But I wouldn’t even apply to do registration, without knowing the reality at all the process building. It didn’t make sense. I did not want to go in there and learn it by the book... It’s a lot to do and a lot to study. [Female recently registered, grad 6–10 years]*

It is perceived to be more difficult for people in larger firms to get the appropriate experience:

- *It’s hard for people in larger firms to get registered. The whole process is set up for small practices. They’re after rounded people but here people are specialised. They ask about contracts which are old fashioned, every contract we have is written specifically for the project by lawyers because they are so big. [Female grad 11–15 years]*
- *I think it’s a slower process, staying in a big firm and trying to get registered. I don’t know, cos I think there’s certain experiences that you need to get registered, I’m not really sure. But when I was working for a small firm there was a girl who was only 26 and she was about to get registered because she was in a small firm she had all these responsibilities and she could already fill out all these different tasks... She had no life pretty much, working from like eight to like ten at night. But what she got was all these different projects and she could lead a project... I mean you wouldn’t get that kind of opportunity in a big firm I feel. [That was a small firm, eight people and the Director was the only registered person.] [Female year out student]*

- *I am planning to register at some point in the next few years. I have enough hours but whether I have enough contract admin is the problem. Because I have only worked on very large projects. Unlike friends of mine, who worked on resi projects where they are running the whole thing, we don't have so much exposure to the fee sides and contracts.* [Female grad 2–5 years]

Some interviewees were discouraged by the legal liabilities attached to being registered:

- *Also the courses have changed format, they used to be lectures and it's now more a workshop sitting around a table with a bunch of old guys who have been badly burnt. All they say is: call a lawyer. Registration which is mean to be about getting self-sufficient and all they say is: don't do anything on your own.* [Male international grad 6–10 years]

Some interviewees experienced additional bureaucratic issues:

- *I am actually registered but it lapsed because of some bank failure – the automatic payment didn't happen. Then they brought in CPD points and I would have to pay double to re-registered and I don't have the time and am somewhat annoyed by it. Getting back on the list is more tedious than one might hope.* [Male registered, grad >15 years]
- *Registration is one of my big problems. When I stopped working in an office, the first couple of years that I went through renewing my registration, I would talk to the Registration Board. The last time I talked to them, it was along the lines of, do I maintain registration, what happens if I don't maintain registration? What happens to my registration when I then go back into the workforce, if I've had an extended period of time out? And they were very unhelpful and they said, well we'll look at it, but you may need to re-register... At that time I had 15 plus years experience and if you're going to tell me that I've lost that experience just because I'm not on a payroll in someone's office, and that I need to then go back and go through the registration system again, I mean...* [female non-practising registered, grad >15 years]
- *I was registered in [another state in Australia]... And then last year I changed registration to [here]. It was incredibly easy: just fill out a form and get a letter from [the other State] to say that I'm registered... I thought they might want to test me for the building laws here but they didn't. It's very strange. I don't know why they don't just have a national body, because it's simple.* [Male registered, grad 11–15 years]

### Process issues (the experience of the process)

There is a strong perception that the registration process is prohibitively time demanding:

- *Other people I went to uni with who worked for a couple of years, were thinking about getting registered and then got pregnant. So by the time they had a baby, came back to work, it's like the registration is the least of their worries, they're trying to juggle the other stuff and getting registered is not an impairment to working. So why would you do it when you don't have any time anyway?* [Female grad 6–10 years]
- *I'm planning to early next year. Been too busy to do the study, time has been the big issue. I want to do it to close the loop. I think some of the stuff about contracts will be good to know. It's a formality that I want to get over with so I don't have to think about it anymore.* [Female grad 6–10 years]
- *I've just not got around to it. Every time I've thought of it something has got in the way and I just haven't had the time: birth of children, big project, meetings I can't get out of which clash with what*

*needs to be done for registration. Hasn't stopped me in the practice but I guess I should do it. Maybe next year. [Male grad >15 years]*

- *I've attended a few PALs courses but have stopped because it's too much time. I've got young kids, it's too much. [Male international grad 6–10 years]*
- *There seems to be always something that is more important, let's say, than getting registered and getting through this really laborious sort of process of gathering information. So I've always delayed it. Maybe one day I'll do it if the time comes and I feel I've got plenty of free time that I can give some more attention to this. [Female international grad 11–15 years]*

The process is also perceived to be daunting:

- *I'm registered. I found it challenging and very time consuming. I think I was lucky to get it first time. You have to be strategic in answering the questions, rather than it being about what you know. [Male registered, grad 2–5 years]*
- *It wasn't easy, but after I finished the process I realised it wasn't as bad as I originally thought it would be. It was better than I expected, I should say. But before I did it, it was quite daunting. [Female registered, grad 6–10 years]*
- *Registration's difficult. It's just... I have no idea how I passed and it seemed to be about the relationship to whether or not you can answer the questions on a test. The interview's different, but the test is just strange... I mean you can read, you can do as much study as you possibly can and maybe get there. Yeah, I think I guess it's the way they word it in that legal sense, maybe. [Female registered, grad 6–10 years]*

Interviewees stated that the longer you leave the registration process, the more difficult it becomes:

- *The process is easier to pass if you have less experience, and that's not right. Surely the more experience you have the better? [Male grad 11–15 years]*
- *My experience is the longer they leave it, the more difficult it becomes, and the less likely they are to ever go through and complete. It's like it's more akin to going to university than practice. So you actually have to keep yourself in the study zone, I think, in order to do it. And that's why in my mind, it's better to link it to university than it is to see it as something that you will naturally be able to fly through after several years of practising, which is not the case. You actually have to get the textbooks out and swot for the exam. So any architect here on the floor, if you just took them one day and put them in the registration exam, the chances are they would fail... Including me. [Male registered, grad >15 years]*
- *I had probably the minimal amount that you could have to be able to do registration but I was keen to do that because I knew that it's pretty hard to do. And the longer you leave it, the harder it is to do. Well, that's what I'd heard. [Female registered, grad >15 years]*
- *I'm from the UK and registered over there. It was kind of considered a rite of passage. It also seems more natural in the UK with the parts 1 to 3 system which means registration is all part of your education. I did find it a bit different in London where there was a more transient population, so less emphasis on registration. [Male internationally registered, grad 11–15 years]*
- *And you can get registered after just having three years out of uni too. I've got 18 years' experience now and I know Architects who are certainly much less proficient at getting things done, or who haven't spent nearly as much time on site, and who don't about all the ways a building's put together, but they're registered. [male international grad >15 years]*

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The brief summary of findings outlined here should be read within the context and limitations of the survey, as described above, and in the knowledge that this is a report of preliminary analyses of both the survey and the case study research. As stated above, this report does not take account of state-by-state differences in the registration process, nor does it take into account the time period within which persons undertook or attempted registration. Nevertheless, the responses highlight a number of areas needing consideration, including the following:

### Perception management

- The benefits and value of registration are unclear.
- The process is perceived to be difficult and daunting due, in particular, to the:
  - amount of time it requires
  - amount of work it requires
  - costs involved.
- There is a perception that the assessment is subjective, inconsistent, and inequitable.
- There is a perception that what is assessed is out-dated, irrelevant, and exclusionary.
- There is a perception that ‘the longer you leave it the harder it is’, so that additional experience in practice is a liability rather than an asset.

### Process issues

- The process is criticised for being misaligned with contemporary architectural practice in all its diversity.
- Would-be registrants report divergent levels of support from their practices and employers.
- Distinct state registration systems and legislation appear to cause unnecessary bureaucracy.
- The process of moving from non-practising to practising status is unclear and inconsistent.
- There are problems with the recognition of international qualifications.
- The stakes are higher for more senior and experienced architects undergoing the registration process.
- There is a lack of feedback systems, constructive criticism, and mentoring for those who are unsuccessful at registration.

Further analyses of both sets of data are being undertaken and will be reported in future documents.