

Teachers Registration Board of South Australia

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MC 05/1098

RECEIVED
1 JUL 2005
BY: MIC

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Submission No.....	69
Date Received	11-7-05

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

Dear Mr Randall

Thank you for your letter dated 11 May 2005 to the Minister for Education and Children's Services regarding the review of skills recognition, upgrading and licensing in relation to the skilled migration system. The Minister has referred your letter to the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia for direct response.

The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia operates within the Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 and Teachers Registration and Standards Regulations 2005. These legislative requirements in South Australia govern the establishment of a teacher registration system and professional standards for teachers to safeguard the public interest and to ensure the welfare and best interests of children. Conferring and collaborating with other teacher regulatory authorities in Australia and New Zealand to ensure effective national exchange of information and promote uniformity and consistency is another legislative function of the Teachers Registration Board.

Issue 1: Current Arrangements for Overseas Skills Recognition and Associated Issues of Licensing and Registration

The Board has in place a series of strategies to provide advice to any overseas qualified teacher seeking information on the requirements to gain a professional licence as a teacher in South Australia. Consistent processes are implemented irrespective of the migration status of the person involved. The Board's website outlines details regarding the process for assessment of overseas qualifications and the requirements for teacher registration (http://www.trb.sa.edu.au/overseas_teachers.htm). For any overseas trained teacher currently residing in South Australia or intending to arrive in this state, arrangements can be made for a private interview conducted by the Principal Qualification Officer. Processes are explained and questions can be answered to ensure immediate feedback. This information service is also provided via email and telephone.

An application for assessment of qualifications at the cost of \$75 can be lodged by post from any location in Australia or overseas at any time as appropriate. Clients are advised to seek an official assessment of qualifications by the Board in order to determine eligibility for professional recognition as a qualified teacher in South Australia. An official assessment report is forwarded to the applicant indicating whether they have met the Board's minimum qualification prerequisites for teacher registration. Other registration processes including lodging an application, undertaking a criminal

record check in Australia and overseas, an English language test (if applicable) and evidence of legal work rights in Australia under the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous affairs are also explained.

If the applicant's qualifications are not recognised, the report advises them of the reasons. Information is provided on the most appropriate tertiary course of study to ensure success in meeting the Board's minimum qualification requirements.

Applicants who have received a skills assessment as a teacher from AEI-NOOSR are also informed that this is for immigration purposes only, with an assessment of their qualifications also being required from the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia as the professional body regulating teaching in this state.

The assessment process outlined enables an overseas trained teacher to establish whether their qualifications are recognised while still off-shore, thus providing them with time to address any shortfalls or to seek further information from prospective employers or immigration authorities.

Issue 2: How Australia's Arrangements Compare with those of other Major Immigration Countries

In terms of the teaching profession, the Board is aware that in most countries the teaching profession is regulated and consequently licensing is obligatory. However it is not possible to make any assumptions regarding comparability of systems as minimum standards vary depending upon the country concerned.

Most countries have implemented national licensing systems whereas in Australia this operates on a State and Territory level. However, the teaching profession is generally regulated in all jurisdictions apart from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, with mutual recognition greatly enhancing the portability of teacher licensing across jurisdictions.

Issue 3: Identify Areas where Australia's Procedures can be Improved

The assessment of an overseas trained teachers qualifications to determine eligibility for recognition as a qualified teacher in South Australia is undertaken in line with legislative requirements. These standards are applicable to any trained teacher whether their credentials are from South Australia, interstate or overseas, with all assessment undertaken on an equitable basis.

The mutual recognition process removes barriers for recognition as a teacher and enables registered teachers from one jurisdiction to have their credential accepted in other states and territories, including New Zealand. However the same consistency does not apply in regards to the federal immigration qualifications process which uses different standards in its processes. Consequently even if an overseas trained teacher is registered in South Australia, their recognition as a qualified teacher for immigration purposes may not be successful. This obvious difference in standards is one of the major anomalies and impediments to qualification recognition for an overseas trained teacher.

Consequently there is a need for greater consistency between federal immigration standards and professional licensing standards especially when the teacher licensing authorities in the States and Territories have taken the initiative and made concerted efforts over a number of years to engage in cooperative arrangements, culminating in

the establishment of the Australian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA).

Therefore to promote efficiency and consistency in the recognition of overseas trained teachers, there would be obvious advantages and immediate impact on federal immigration barriers if an overseas trained teacher whose qualifications were recognised in for example South Australia, were in turn given positive consideration by the Australian immigration authorities when determining the suitability of those qualifications for immigration purposes.

On the employment issue, in most cases the recognition of qualifications of an overseas trained teacher by the licensing authority also ensures recognition by an employer. However there are other criteria that employers specify for a particular teaching vacancy which go beyond the qualification and professional licensing requirements.

Yours sincerely



Wendy Hastings
REGISTRAR

7/7/05

cc: Minister for Education and Children's Services