



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

Australian Institute  
of Architects

Response to State  
Nominated Skilled  
Migration Paper

**Submission to:  
Bevan Fletcher  
Principal Policy Officer  
Department of State  
Development.**

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## SUBMISSION BY

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## PURPOSE

- This submission is made by the South Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) to the Department of State Development in response to the request for industry feedback in relation to the Industry Skills requirements through State-nominated skilled migration.
- This submission has been prepared by SA Executive Director and National Education Manager Nicolette Di Lernia.
- At the time of this submission the South Australian Chapter President is Mario Dreosti.

## INFORMATION

### ***Who is making this submission?***

- The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is an independent voluntary subscription-based member organization with approximately 11,000 members, of which 800 are based in South Australia. Members are bound by a Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.
- The Institute, incorporated in 1929, is one of 96 member associations of the International Union of Architects (UIA) and is represented on the International Practice Commission.

### ***Where does the Institute rank as a professional association?***

- At approximately 11,000 members, the Institute represents the largest group of non-engineering professionals in Australia.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Institute is making this submission in relation to ANZSCO number 232111 occupation: architects. To be registered as an architect in Australia, a person must:

- undertake 10 semesters of tertiary study, graduating with a Master of Architecture from an accredited university program
- complete a minimum of 3300 hours (approximately two years) of experience under the supervision of an architect
- pass the Architectural Practice Examination: Part 1 – Logbook and Statement of Practical Experience; Part 2 – Written Examination; Part 3 – Examination by Interview

This submission does not relate to any of the other allied design occupations included in the skilled migrant program.

## 2.0 SKILLS DEMAND

The demand for architects is closely related to the activity in the construction sector, which in turn is subject to the level of activity in the local economy. Economic conditions in South Australia over the past two years have resulted in steady demand for architectural services with many practices in South Australia reporting that they have a sustainable workload.

The State Government is the most significant procurer of architectural services in South Australia. State Government stimulation programs, such as the DECD STEM and Building Better Schools programs, have assisted in increasing activity within the design and construction sectors, providing a more stable pipeline of work over the next 2 to 5 years. However, the adoption of alternative procurement methods, which reduce architectural involvement over the life of a project, has constrained the potential impact of these programs on the demand for architectural services so we anticipate that growth will remain modest.

The most significant area of construction activity by the State Government has been civil infrastructure. This also has limited impact on the level of demand for architectural services, with architects engaged in a restricted capacity on these projects.

Low levels of growth in the South Australian economy and population in recent years has also resulted in what can be described as a stable rather than buoyant private construction sector. The SA Centre for Economic Studies<sup>1</sup> noted a modest growth in South Australian building construction in 2017, primarily resulting from growth in the residential sector. This was offset by a fall in non-residential construction activity during the same period. Overall construction activity is predicted by the Master Builders Association to remain relatively consistent over the next 4 to 5 years<sup>2</sup>.

The level of activity in housing construction has limited impact on the demand for architectural services, with the anticipated drop in residential construction over the next 5 years likely to have a minimal effect on employment opportunities for architects. Commercial development, which is more likely to involve architects, is expected to increase in activity in 2018 by 14.6% but reduce progressively over the next 4 years to 2017 levels. This is therefore not expected to result in a sustained increase in employment for architects.

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<sup>1</sup><https://blogs.adelaide.edu.au/saces/2017/11/27/sa-data-wrap-sa-economy-grows-strongest-in-8-years-construction-activity-continues-to-rise/>

<sup>2</sup> Master Builders Australia Building & Construction Industry Forecasts – December Quarter 2017

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During 2016 and 2017 the Institute has been contacted by, on average, two practices per month who are seeking to employ a staff member, usually someone with some experience post-graduation. The rate of enquiries has risen slightly in the first quarter of 2018 to three per month. This contrasts with 2015, where the Institute received frequent enquiries from experienced architects and graduates who were seeking employment.

We are also aware that there has been increased staff mobility during this time, which is an indication that employees feel confident in seeking a new position. During times of limited job opportunities, the tendency is for staff to remain in long term positions which provide them with potentially greater job security.

The architectural sector is therefore relatively stable in terms of employment levels at the current time, having experienced modest growth over the past two years. There is sufficient activity to provide employment for local architects and this is expected to continue in the medium term based on predicted activity in the construction sector. However, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant growth in demand for architects in the immediate future.

### **3.0 GRADUATE NUMBERS**

The number of students studying architecture in Australia has been rising steadily over the past 30 years. The number of places offered by universities coupled with an increase in the number of accredited architecture programs in Australia – 15 in 1988<sup>3</sup> as compared with 18 in 2018<sup>4</sup> - has driven this increase in graduate numbers. The table on page 5 shows the growth in student numbers and graduates from 2008 to 2012.

In addition to the existing programs, five new architecture programs are currently being developed across Australia. Of these none is located in South Australia. The first cohort of graduates from these new Master of Architecture degrees is expected in 2023. While this will add to the number of graduates, the initial intake for new programs is generally modest. For example, Monash University graduated 23 Master of Architecture students in 2012, their first graduate year. Therefore, the impact of this increase in programs will not be significant until well into the future and may be impacted by other factors including demand for overseas places and capping of funding for postgraduate places. The impact on South Australia will be negligible.

South Australia has two architecture programs, with approximately 150 students completing the Master of Architecture in 2017. This includes a significant cohort (approximately 40%) of overseas students, which has also increased over time. On average two thirds of overseas graduates return to their country of origin post-graduation.

Therefore, in the order of 110 graduates of Master of Architecture entered the South Australian employment market in 2018. While we believe that this exceeds the number of architecture positions available within South Australia there is no data to support this.

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<sup>3</sup> Architecture Schools of Australia Handbook 1988

<sup>4</sup> Architecture Accreditation Council of Australia website

Australian Schools of Architecture – Statistical Comparison  
 Extracted from “Architecture Schools of Australasia” editions 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013

State/ Territory	2008						2009						2010						2011						2012					
	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2007	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2008	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2009	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2010	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2011	1st year students EFTS/UJL *	Total students Pts 1&2 EFTS/UJL *	Grad'ns from prof degree- 2012												
ACT	76	234	23	116	247	31	206	320	31	206	320	102	401	18	132	362	27													
NSW	497	1854	275	529	2086	235	527	2416	320	583	284	583	2218	284	452	1961	352													
VIC	519	1819	234	647	2221	281	754	2720	345	618	353	618	2726	353	518	2704	394													
QLD	321	1004	113	444	1148	115	306	1354	112	364	86	364	1264	86	476	1513	136													
SA	243	769	70	283	875	71	266	829	84	251	87	251	829	87	278	896	111													
WA	277	813	110	236	774	91	264	989	96	384	105	384	1312	105	303	1028	117													
TAS	80	358	47	92	349	45	145	407	59	125	42	125	430	42	154	471	63													
NT	11	26	0	18	34	0	22	42	0	22	0	22	42	0	19	41	0													
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>6877</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>2365</b>	<b>7734</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>2490</b>	<b>9077</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>2449</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>2449</b>	<b>9222</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>2332</b>	<b>8975</b>	<b>1200</b>													

\* Equivalent Full Time Student Unit/Load

**South Australian Schools of Architecture – Comparison of Graduate Numbers**  
**Extracted from ‘Australian Schools of Architecture’ 1988, 1998, 2008, 2014 editions**

University		1987		1997		2007		2013	
<b>ADELAIDE</b>		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	Domestic	19	4	17	7	26	9	20	11
	Overseas	1	2	4	1	0	92	14	5
	Total	20	6	F	8	26	11	34	16
<b>Total Adel Uni Graduates</b>		26		29		37		50	
<b>UniSA</b>		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	Domestic	14	2	11	10	21	11	23	15
	Overseas	1	0	3	0	5	0	4	8
	Total	15	2	14	10	26	11	27	23
<b>Total UniSA Graduates</b>		17		24		37		50	
<b>Total SA Graduates</b>		43		53		72		100	

Both universities report anecdotally that in 2016 and 2017 graduates seeking work within Adelaide have found employment in architecture or other fields. Graduates also move away from South Australia, travel or enrol for further study. Some also gain employment in allied fields including architectural education.

This is supported by the low level of enquiries received by the Institute from graduates seeking work. The number of enquiries has decreased steadily since 2015 and this year we have not been contacted by any graduates seeking assistance in finding employment post-graduation. We are aware that some practices are offering positions to students undertaking part time work during their studies once they graduate.

The number of architects engaged in sessional and full-time teaching has also increased with the growth in student numbers. It is important to note that the Australian tertiary education system relies heavily on income from overseas students, who contribute strongly to the economy. For overseas students, inclusion of architecture on the list of Skilled Occupations is an incentive to study in Australia.

Therefore, while the number of graduates from architecture programs is increasing, employment opportunities within South Australia appear to be increasing at an equivalent rate. The growth in student numbers is also being offset by the rise in the percentage of overseas students studying within Australia, the majority of whom do not remain in Australia. Further growth in student numbers is likely to be in the overseas cohort. Domestic student numbers are anticipated to remain stable as a result of changes to funding of postgraduate places, which impacts architects, who require a Masters level qualification to gain registration.

#### **4.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIGRANTS WITHIN ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE**

Migrants who have practiced as architects in their country of origin face numerous challenges in gaining recognition as architects in Australia. The process for gaining registration is expensive and takes considerable time. Applicants are required to demonstrate the equivalence of their tertiary qualifications, the relevance of their previous professional experience and their professional competency within the Australian system.

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Until registration is achieved, migrants cannot refer to themselves as architects and are restricted in some of the duties that they can perform, particularly in the contract administration phase of projects. However, they can still work as building designers and drafters/technicians without being registered and can be employed in these roles within architectural practice.

Migrants who come from non-English speaking backgrounds also face challenges with regard to communication. Written and oral communication skills and proficiency in technical terminology are all important within the practice of architecture. Limited English language skills can limit work opportunities.

It is also necessary for migrants to gain an understanding of the environmental, technical, regulatory and legal systems that are applicable within Australia. Depending on their country of origin, architects from overseas may need to undertake further study in Australia to enable them to gain sufficient knowledge to make them attractive to employers.

The Institute is contacted for advice and support by migrants with architectural experience. As a result, the Institute is aware that migrants, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, frequently find it challenging to gain employment within the profession. Employment in allied fields or as technical staff within architectural practice is more common, especially in the short term following migration. Opportunities increase once migrants develop their technical and English language skills, with some undertaking further study in Australia to improve their employability.

The Institute also believes that the number of migrants entering South Australia with architectural experience is relatively low. This is based on anecdotal evidence gained from discussion with architectural practices, membership data and enquiries from migrants.

Therefore, while employment as an architect is restricted by the requirements for registration and the need to develop skills applicable to practice within South Australia, the number of migrants affected is relatively low. Therefore, there is a limited impact on local employment.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Employment opportunities for architects in South Australia are relatively stable at the current time and anticipated to remain so for the next 5 years. The supply of locally educated graduates meets the demand within South Australia, with a limited number of positions for experienced architects also available.

The relatively small number of migrants currently entering South Australia with architectural experience has minimal impact on architectural practice. Overseas architects can provide alternative perspectives, work methodologies and experience once they gain employment in local practice.

Overseas educated architects experience significant challenges in finding employment as architects due to their lack of knowledge of Australian architectural practice and the onerous process for achieving registration. However, a number do find employment within the profession and there are employment opportunities available in allied fields that migrants with architectural skills can access.

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While the Institute is aware that there are limited vacancies for experienced architects in South Australia, and that the number of local graduates is increasing, the impact of migration is relatively low. The Institute is also aware that removing architects from the Skilled Migration list is likely to reduce the number of overseas students, placing significant pressure on the tertiary education system and limiting employment opportunities within the tertiary sector.

Therefore, the Institute recommends that architects remain on the skilled migration list at the current time. A review in five years should be undertaken to assess the employment conditions, migrant numbers and graduate numbers at that time.