

**Submission
No 13**

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS REGISTRATION BILL 2019

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Inquiry into the Professional Engineers Registration Bill 2019 Submission

Dear Committee Members,

I write to lodge a submission to your Inquiry into the proposed Engineer Registration Bill.

I support engineer registration in NSW.

I have worked in public infrastructure design & construction for 23 years both in Local Government and in private engineering consulting firms. I am not an engineer instead I completed my engineering qualifications through TAFE. I have the utmost respect for those good engineers who have completed a degree having worked closely with them for many years, their ability to isolate the problem and innovate to find the best solution is second to none, but also recognise that not all engineers are good or even qualified.

I have had firsthand experience of working in an Engineering Registered environment as one of the companies that I worked for was a Queensland based company attempting to gain a foothold in the highly competitive NSW market. This company saw the value of the registration scheme and had integrated it into our design and Quality Assurance processes, in fact we found it practicably impossible to justify removing it from the QA process even though it was not a requirement in NSW. This was because it was industry best practice, it would have effectively meant a reduction in QA and the type of projects we were engaged in had significant potential to impact businesses, reputations and lives if they went wrong.

For many years I have seen a reducing influence of the Engineering profession in Local Government, when I commenced working for Council an Engineer attended all Council meetings as an expert advisor, they did not supply opinion or get involved in the politics they just gave expert advice and answered questions about the feasibility and practicality of the issues being debated by the Council. This has been replaced by an engineering section in each Council report not necessarily written by an engineer, our Engineering and Planning departments of Council have been merged and headed up by a Town Planner and managed by a Surveyor. Consequently, as we have seen in the recent fit for the future process, nearly every regional council in NSW has a massive backlog in their infrastructure maintenance that it is hard to believe would have happened if the Councillors had a true understanding of the ramifications of this.

There is a big focus on innovation now, an engineering degree is a degree in innovation it teaches someone to solve problems that no one has seen before in ways that no one has thought of. Once complete and having gained specialist experience in their field of choice they should be recognised and appreciated.

Registration of engineers in New South Wales is long overdue. Right now, anyone can call themselves an engineer in NSW which is not the case with any other related profession.

Other professions have had licensing and registration regimes in place for many years to guarantee professional standards, protect the profession from unscrupulous and unqualified operators and protect the public.

Examples of other professions where this is the case and where it has had an impact on public safety include: architects, builders, electricians, plumbers, doctors, nurses, and there are many others.

When you consider that engineers sit at the apex of the building and construction process – scoping, designing and overseeing the work of other trades and professionals, it underlines how absurd the current situation is. Introducing engineer registration is simply a matter of public-interest and closes a long-time regulatory gap which makes no sense and exposes the public to risks.

I understand why high-profile residential construction failures at Mascot and Opal towers have been the focus in the media, but these crises are indicative of a wider problem that goes well beyond the vertical building sector. Our major projects such as roads, bridges, rail, water & energy projects should not be exposed to unqualified people who can only call themselves engineers because there is no registration system.

There is plenty of evidence that a lack of engineering input is affecting project outcomes. This includes the problem of public safety, but it also blocks innovation and leads to major projects running overtime and over budget. There are several recent examples of public and worker safety being compromised, but there is also a litany of issues with cost overruns and delays attributable to poor scoping of engineering dependent/critical projects.

People deserve to know if they are employing a properly qualified and experienced engineer whether they're building a bridge, an apartment or a new energy generator. And the public deserve to know that the infrastructure and services they use are safe. I urge you to support the Engineer Registration Bill to give the public confidence and workers in the profession the respect they deserve.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Fayle

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