

**Submission
No 33**

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS REGISTRATION BILL 2019

Organisation: United Services Union

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United Services Union
Level 7, 321 Pitt St, Sydney NSW 2000
p (02) 9265 8211 | e united@usu.org.au
f (02) 9261 2265 | Support Team 1300 136 604

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Mr Alex Greenwich MP
Chair, Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning
Committee

Contact: Daniel Papps
Ref: 20191126DPA01SYDMET

Dr Mr Greenwich,

Submission on Professional Engineer Registration Bill

The United Services Union ("**USU**") writes to the Committee regarding the *Professional Engineers Registration Bill* ("**the Bill**").

The USU is a [trade union](#) representing over 30,000 workers in a variety of industries including local government, energy and utilities, airlines, and clerical.

Our members include engineers, as well as a significant number of people who work with, or under the supervision of, engineers, including constructions workers, labourers, tradespeople and support staff.

The USU firmly believes that the professional registration of engineers in New South Wales is imperative, and for this reason we are fully supportive of the Bill.

In particular, we submit that the Bill strikes an appropriate balance by proposing a co-regulatory model consistent with similar schemes in Queensland and Victoria which would lead to marked improvements in the following areas:

- safety;
- professional integrity;
- consumer confidence;
- economic growth.

Safety

Establishing a scheme for the registration of engineers would lead to marked safety improvements for the wide range of workers in the New South Wales building and construction industry. It would also lead to improved safety outcomes with respect to the use of public infrastructure and/or private construction work for members of the public. The current absence of such a scheme continues to poses major risks to safety of our members and to the public who may be interacting with significant construction projects, whether they be roads, utility services, vertical buildings or

domestic construction which was designed or signed-off on by individuals who are under no obligation to be trained, certified, or maintain contemporary working knowledge. Additionally, a significant number of our members involved in construction are engaged in local government where important infrastructure projects are delivered by Councils. This is particularly the case in regional communities. Poor or deficient engineering work can present a real threat to these communities leading to property damage, and unsafe and inefficient water, gas, and electricity systems.

Establishing a scheme requiring the professional registration of engineers will ensure that all engineering work is completed by qualified and competent engineering professionals. This will minimise the risks to worker and community safety and is one of the primary reasons that the USU supports the adoption of the Bill.

Professional Integrity

The USU also supports the Bill's co-regulatory model which is consistent with similar schemes in Queensland and Victoria. This model not only promotes national consistency, but also ensures that New South Wales does not become the "landing spot" for unqualified and unscrupulous individuals passing themselves off as professional engineers who are unable to comply with the sensible registration schemes in Queensland and Victoria.

Furthermore the Bill will see similar registration, accreditation, and continuing professional development standards apply to engineers as to those that apply to other professions including teachers, doctors and lawyers. By contemplating a partnership between the government and the industry, the Bill's co-regulatory model will ensure that the registration requirements of engineers is not overly prescriptive and keeps pace with skill and knowledge development within the industry. Fundamentally, the scheme envisaged by the Bill will ensure that professional engineers have the appropriate skill and knowledge to undertake the critical work they do on a day-to-day basis.

The professional registration system contemplated by the Bill ensures the integrity of the engineering profession and provides a safeguard to our members who work with, or under the supervision of, engineers.

Consumer Confidence

In light of the significant media attention surrounding Mascot Tower it is more important than ever that the NSW Parliament takes decisive steps to restore consumer confidence in the building and construction industry in New South Wales.

We are of the view that adopting the registration scheme contemplated by this Bill is one important step in restoring consumer confidence, as it will ensure that building and construction work in New South Wales is overseen by competent, capable, and qualified professional engineers.

Economic Growth

The registration scheme proposed by the Bill is also a cost-effective response to some of the economic challenges faced when delivering major infrastructure projects.

The USU is aware of the cost over-runs and delays that can occur on major infrastructure projects as the result of errors in the design, implementation, and certification. By adopting this Bill, we believe that the registration scheme will partly alleviate economic waste attributed to unqualified and unregulated engineering practice at all stages of major infrastructure work.

Moreover, adopting a registration scheme which is compatible with those in other eastern states will reduce the burden on industry who often have to work across state boundaries and enhance the viability of the engineering industry in New South Wales.

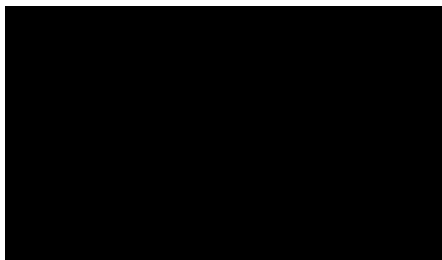
Conclusion

This Bill addresses a glaring regulatory gap which places New South Wales at a significant disadvantage when compared with our neighbours who have already adopted engineering registration schemes. The Bill proposing a sensible registration scheme which will help to deliver safe and efficient engineering projects across the state and represents a decisive response aimed at restoring confidence in the building and construction industry in New South Wales.

For these reasons we urge the NSW Parliament to enact this Bill.

Should you wish to discuss this submission further please do not hesitate to contact Mr Daniel Papps on [REDACTED].

Regards,



Stephen Hughes

ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY

Per: Daniel Papps, Manager Industrial, Rules, Governance & Compliance