

Competency standards under review

by Michael Bevan

Engineers Australia is currently reviewing its Stage 2 Competency Standards for Professional Engineer, Engineering Technologist and Engineering Associate. The revision seeks to further align the standards with international benchmarks, including those of the International Engineering Alliance. The new standards seek to balance this rigour with a more user-friendly approach across multiple areas of practice.

Competency standards for the engineering profession have experienced significant development overseas since the original drafting of the Australian Engineering Competency Standards in the early 1990s. The New Zealand government proclaimed the Chartered Professional Engineers Act in 2002, using competency standards as the basis for registration. The International Engineering Alliance (originating from the Washington Accord) has developed professional competency exemplar statements which are similar to the New Zealand competencies. The Engineering Councils of South Africa and the UK also use similar statements of competence. The 2012 revision has adopted much of this international work.

The 2012 revision clarifies the competencies. There are 16 proposed ele-

ments of competence directed towards self, community, workplace and outputs. Collectively, the competencies express the knowledge and skill base, engineering application abilities, and professional skills, values and attitudes that must be demonstrated to practise independently or unsupervised. Applicants will be able to identify and provide the required evidence of their competency more flexibly while maintaining the standards of being chartered.

A public consultation phase as part of the review was held from November 2011 to January 2012. This included the receipt of comments via the Engineers Australia website and at industry forums held in Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.

During the consultation phase over 80 comments were received and over 200 attended the industry forums. Comments were generally positive. For example, Bruce Freer, senior engineer and Professional Development Program coordinator at CitiWest Water, said: "From our initial reading, the content of this document was most encouraging. It appears that the concerns we hold have been identified and the flexibility alluded to in the text should make addressing the indica-

tors of competency more achievable. We congratulate Engineers Australia on this initiative and look forward to updates on the 2012 proposal."

The revised draft, now online at www.engineersaustralia.org.au/stage2revision, reflects the comments made and discussions held. Engineers Australia has initiated a pilot program, open to select members, to refine the proposed 2012 standards.

The change-over of applications from the 2004-2012 standards, in particular the management of PDP participant assessments, has also been considered. Engineers Australia will publish a process that will show how the new system will recognise prior assessment. In these circumstances Engineers Australia will accept applications using the 2004-2012 standards after 1 July 2012. Information will be distributed to PDP Partners and participants and published on the Engineers Australia website.

Michael Bevan is Engineers Australia's associate director for registration. The Engineers Australia website provides up-to-date information for the Stage 2 competency review.