20th October, 2011

BRCWG Secretariat  
Deregulation Group  
Department of Finance and Deregulation

By email: BRCWGS@finance.gov.au

To whom it may concern

We write to support the establishment of a national statutory registration system for engineers, for the benefit of our members, in the context of the recent call for submissions by the BRCWG for proposed future reforms under the Seamless National Economy Process.

As you would know, workplace safety is of paramount importance to our membership and to us as a union. Nothing can be more important than employers providing a safe workplace where our members can discharge their duties in the faith that their health and safety is not compromised.

Our unions’ membership at some stage has been touched by the consequences of engineering failure, or failure to engage competent engineering professionals. Those consequences can be devastating to worker’s health, their ongoing career and the welfare of them and their families. As such, we believe it is entirely appropriate that there be put in place a statutory registration scheme for engineers in Australia.

At a time when it is proposed that there be the wholesale importation of labour to meet skills shortages in the engineering profession, we believe it is imperative that appropriate measures be put in place to assess the competence not only of Australian trained engineers, but this supplementary foreign labour. A shortage of engineers in parts of Australia – and a resulting patchiness in available work for our membership could also in part be addressed by the establishment of a statutory registration scheme allowing engineers to travel freely throughout the Commonwealth.

By ensuring that engineers who provide advice to industry are appropriately qualified and competent in the work that they are performing, a statutory registration scheme would assist in ensuring that workplaces are safe, and that there is an appropriate mechanism for applying sanctions against those who perform sub-standard work. We understand that the government is moving towards a seamless national economy and that a number of occupations have already been through a substantial consultation process with the aim of establishing a national licensing or registration system. Given the importance of the work that engineers perform, and the fact that many of the occupations already included in this scheme are reliant on the work of engineers, we believe it is only appropriate that engineers also be included in a national registration system.

In this regard, we support the work that Engineers Australia is doing in cooperation with the engineering union, APESMA, the employer association, Consult Australia and IPWEA as another professional association for engineering and commend to you a national statutory registration scheme for engineers.

Yours sincerely,

Dave Noonan
National Secretary
CFMEU Construction and General Division