

Electrical Safety Reform in the NT – Electrical Safety Bill 2021

Consultation Submission

Chris Lehmann 07/03/2022

Introduction

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors, recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. Our website is www.masterelectricians.com.au

On reading the explanatory materials our association is supportive of the aims of the legislation and we have only a few areas concern for our members and the electrical industry as a whole.

We are encouraged that the aims of the Electrical Safety Bill are to harmonise the Licensing, Regulation and Workplace Safety functions of the industry.

Areas of Concern

Meaning of electrical work.

Understanding that the NT legislation is based on the Qld Act, we have several concerns around the Definition of Electrical Work in Section 9-2. We believe definitions in this section limits the ability of trainees and trades assistants to perform peripheral and incidental tasks under the supervision of a licensed tradesperson compared to the current arrangements and in comparison, to the Qld Act.

In an era of skills shortages, and increased material costs we believe that this is a retrograde step and will worsen the current situation without an increase in safety standards.

It is our position that the corresponding section of the Queensland that deals with the "Meaning of Electrical Work" be inserted instead of the current wording, as it has proven to successfully balance both the safety and operational concerns, in the performance of electrical work.

Other areas of consideration for inclusion and consideration are –

- A Continual Professional Development (CPD) regime like the Tasmanian model to ensure that Electrical Workers and Contractors stay up to date with safety, technical and regulatory changes in the industry.
- The adoption of Occupational licensing Supervision of Prescribed Work Code of Practice such as exists in other states.

Conclusion

We are also eager to be involved in the consultation and formulation of the Regulations that will follow the passing of this Bill, and to positively contribute towards the formation of the Electrical Safety Board. On balance there are many positive aspects for the electrical industry and the community in the Northern Territory in the broad thrust of this reform.

Master Electricians is supportive of the intent of the Bill but would like our concerns around the definitions of the Meaning of Electrical Work to be given urgent consideration due to the significant economic and skilling impact that this could have. We look forward to collaborating constructively with you to advance these important and timely reforms for the benefit of the community and the industry.