

National Competition Policy
Treasury
By email: nationalcompetitionpolicy@treasury.gov.au

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Dear National Competition Policy team

National licensing for electrical occupations

Introduction

The Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (COSBOA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed national licensing regime for electrical occupations. COSBOA has been a strong advocate for reform that enables small businesses and workers to operate efficiently across jurisdictions, reduces red tape, and have workforce mobility especially during Australia's periods of natural disasters.

The current fragmented approach to licensing electrical occupations across Australian states and territories creates unnecessary regulatory burden, compliance costs, and administrative complexity for small electrical businesses. These businesses face significant barriers when operating across multiple jurisdictions, limiting workforce mobility and potentially exacerbating skills shortages in regional areas.

Our consideration of the proposal is below.

Commentary

COSBOA is broadly supportive of a well-designed and phased national licensing scheme for electrical occupations, provided it is practical, cost-effective, and delivers clear improvements for small business. Government must guarantee no increase in administrative burden for small businesses, with past harmonisation failure stemming from inconsistent application and limited transition support.

In the move towards a national scheme, it is key that there should be:

- a clear framework regarding who will be responsible for managing the national scheme,
- recognition of prior learning and credentials,
- no unexpected increases to fee structures,
- a roadmap outlining what information will be shared and required from all states and territories' regulators and Departments with dates and sufficient transitional period,
- clear and concise rules on the process to applying for a national license, and
- a digital platform that allows workers to access their license and any other updates they may require.

Local regulatory authorities should retain oversight of regionally specific issues, such as geographic, climatic variances in electrical work, and safety considerations. It is also imperative that small businesses should not bear the cost or complexity of transitioning to a new licensing model.

Our member, Master Builders Australia have also made a submission that COSBOA endorses.

Conclusion

The move towards a national licensing regime for electrical occupations presents a timely opportunity to boost productivity, address workforce shortages, and foster genuine competition. However, the new system should genuinely create harmonisation at all levels of regulation across Government and be consistent. Small business realities must also be front and centre.

COSBOA urges government to ensure any reforms are measured by their practical benefit to Australia's small business community, with clear, tested mechanisms to prevent cost increases and compliance complexity.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute and restate our willingness to work collaboratively with government and regulators at all stages of the reform.



Matthew Addison
Chair, COSBOA