



Australian Government



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

19 September 2025

Ms Anna Barker
Competition Taskforce
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Ms Barker

National licencing for electrical occupations

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on national licencing for electrical occupations.

Currently, each state and territory is responsible for deciding which occupations require a registration or licence, and the requirements that are attached to receiving and maintaining a registration or licence (e.g. training). This arrangement operates contrary to creating a more seamless national economy and reducing regulatory burden. It creates duplicative costs and processes for businesses operating across jurisdictions and sustains legacy barriers to the movement of labour and resources between jurisdictions within Australia.

The arrangements for electrical occupations affect small businesses across the construction industry, including electricians, plumbers and gas fitters. Small businesses operating in border regions between states and territories are particularly affected, for example, contractors installing solar power equipment require electrical licencing in each state they operate as well as national accreditation from an industry body.

The ASBFEO welcomes the Australian Government's announcement to pursue national occupational licencing for electrical occupations, and we commend the Competition Taskforce in Treasury for progressing this important reform that we expect will benefit the many small businesses in the electrical trades.

We have previously highlighted that the full benefits of Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) are not being realised.¹ Some jurisdictions have delayed recognition for some professions, while others have excluded professions entirely or chosen not to participate. For example, Queensland does not participate in AMR. The ACT, though not a signatory to the IGA establishing AMR has chosen to implement it, but with a variety of exclusions.

The ASBFEO supports Option 1 in the form of a uniform national licencing scheme for electrical occupations. National occupation licencing can improve competition and labour mobility, reduce the regulatory burden and cost to small business, and overcome the demonstrated limitations of mutual recognition frameworks. We have not commented on the more specific technical questions in this consultation as industry stakeholders are best equipped to address.

¹ Submission on Revitalising National Competition Policy, ASBFEO, 17 October 2024



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Negotiation will be essential to reaching a harmonised approach that is mutually acceptable to states and territories, industry and businesses. We therefore encourage Treasury and government to engage in genuine, constructive and ongoing engagement with these stakeholders, including facilitating co-design and reflective review to ensure the design and operation of the system is right-size and effective.

The issues paper cites Productivity Commission modelling that forecasts a significant benefit to the national economy from occupational licencing reforms, but notes there will be transition costs for workers and business, and potentially added costs for those whose current state licences cover multiple occupations. To minimise transition costs, we advocate for a reasonable transition period and for Government to work with key representative groups and stakeholders to educate small businesses about transition and implementation.

Businesses should be seen as enablers of these reforms and partners in the reform process, helping to deliver a significant national dividend from enhanced efficiency and productivity. To realise this economic benefit, we would expect that an investment is made to help small businesses transition to a national licencing scheme, through education and other appropriate support. We would also expect that any licencing and administrative fees imposed on small business remain comparable to existing fees at a state and territory level, and for policy design to mitigate circumstances where some licence holders may need to apply for different licences covering occupations, as contemplated by the issues paper.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Advocacy team via email at advocacy@asbfeo.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Bruce Billson

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman