



**ELB**

**Electrical Licensing Board**

T a s m a n i a

**Electrical Licensing Board**

**Tasmania**

**Annual Report**

**1998-9**

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## ***1 Introduction***

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Once again it's my pleasure to provide the Electrical Licensing Board's annual report, the third since its inception.

This year has witnessed a number of changes in the electricity industry in Tasmania, with the highlight being the implementation of the *Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Regulations 1999* (SR 9 of 1999). The Board has had a long-standing aim of improving the level of industry self-regulation by:

- increasing the level of disciplinary activity;
- increasing the level of professionalism of industry participants; and
- improving the notification and inspection process and the penalties associated with failure to comply with standards and regulations.

The first of the above came about with the establishment of the Disciplinary Panel in March 1998. The second has been met with the implementation of the new regulations, and work is progressing at present on the third.

In our last report, we voiced our frustrations in the lack of progress on:

- a more nationally consistent schedule of licence fees;
- a cohesive set of regulations covering the operations of the licensing system and unlicensed work; and
- the early implementation of modern regulations covering worker and customer installation safety.

We are pleased with developments in the first two matters, which are discussed more fully later in this report, but we note that there has still been little progress on worker or infrastructure safety.

We have also been pleased with the appointment of an additional officer into Electrical Safety Group. This has resulted in the acceleration of the electrical safety legislative programme, which was otherwise in danger of stalling. In addition, this new position has been a significant help to the operations of the Disciplinary Panel.

The Board continues to be involved in a diverse range of activities, and this year we have pondered such matters as:

- improving the system for measuring on-the-job competency through a profiling system;
- in-house licensing;
- Electrical Contractor training; and
- revisions to the off-the-job components of the apprentice training system.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board members for their dedication and application throughout the past year. It has been an

important year, with the new licensing regulations finally introduced – a process I can recall being involved with for at least ten years!

Thanks must also be extended to the Regulator's office for providing secretarial services, meeting rooms and refreshments. My particular thanks go to Bob Rutherford, who has been a supporter of the Board and its activities since its beginnings. His new role will tend to move him more to the periphery of our work, and we will surely miss his involvement and his unique way of addressing complex problems.

I look forward to the coming year, confident that the Board is well placed to pursue its objectives.

*Wim de Puit*  
*Chairman*  
*July 1999.*

## 2 *ELB Background*

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The Electrical Licensing Board (ELB) was originally established by Energy Minister Robin Gray in 1992 to provide advice on matters relating to electrical licensing. It initially had an advisory role only, and was not framed by any legislation. The only powers available to it were via the HEC representatives, by way of the 1934 Licensing Regulations.

During 1997/98 the Board was constituted as a legal body. The *Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997* was proclaimed on 25 February 1998, and the ELB proper was established with the objective of assisting the Regulator in the administration of the vocational licensing system.

Major Board milestones to date:

- 1992      Advisory board established
- 1995      Electricity Supply Industry Act enacted
- 1998      Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act enacted
- 1998      ELB formally constituted as a legal body
- 1998      Disciplinary Panel formed
- 1999      Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Regulations introduced.

There has been no change to the membership of the Board during the period under review.

### 3 Record of Meetings

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The Board met 11 times in the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999. The following table shows the Board members, their affiliation, and the number of meetings attended.

*Table 1 - Meetings*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Meetings</b>
Brian Aherne	Insurance Council of Australia	10
Wim de Puit	Aurora Energy	10
Bill Eldridge	Tas. Electro-technology and Utilities ITB	10
John Hammersley	Office of the Tasmanian Electricity Regulator	8
Allan Kenny	Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union	11
Mac Russell	National Electrical Contractors Association	8
Sonia Weidenbach	Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading	9

<i>Secretary,</i> Robert Steedman	Office of the Tasmanian Electricity Regulator	11
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Mr Steedman provides the Board's administrative support on behalf of the Regulator.

## 4 Licensing

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### 4.1 Statistics

The tables below outline the numbers of licences issued during the year, and provide an overview comparison with previous years:

*Table 2 - Licences & Permits Issued*

Month	Electrical Technician	Electrical Contractors	Restricted & Provisional
Jul-98	7	6	11
Aug-98	12	5	9
Sep-98	16	11	11
Oct-98	5	4	2
Nov-98	11	8	4
Dec-98	9	4	2
Jan-99	11	9	7
Feb-99	22	12	5
Mar-99	15	7	3
Apr-99	10	3	5
May-99	15	4	3
Jun-99	4	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>64</b>

*Table 3 - Licences on Register*

Type	30 June 99	30 June 98	30 June 97
Electrical Technicians	6159	6029	5909
Electrical Contractors	1174	1200	1152
Miscellaneous Licences	292	59	80

## 4.2 Regulations

The most significant licensing matter for the year was the introduction of the new *Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Regulations 1999*, which replaced the aging 1934 Licensing Regulations. The important changes are:

- revised fees, now at a nationally consistent level;
- three-year licence for technicians;
- requirement for contractors to hold public liability insurance; and
- exclusion of certain types of work from the requirement to hold a licence.

In addition application fees were introduced, and fees were set for the issue of replacement licences, copies of extracts of the register, and commencement of an appeal.

The following table summarises the new fees.

*Table 4 - Fees*

Service	Fee Units <sup>1</sup>
Technician's Licence	90 (for three years)
Contractor's Licence	200 pa
Provisional Licence	30
Licence Application	30
Late Application (Contractor)	100
Late Application (Technician)	50
Duplicate Licence	15
Register Extract	5 <sup>2</sup>
Register Inspection	10 <sup>3</sup>
Appeal	250

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<sup>1</sup> A Fee Unit at the time of making of the regulations was \$1.

<sup>2</sup> The Regulator may waive or reduce this fee.

<sup>3</sup> The Regulator may waive or reduce this fee.

### **4.3 National Restricted Electrical Licence**

There has been significant interest in the restricted licensing system over the last few years, and the Board has had particular success with the running of a pilot scheme for plumbers who perform minor electrical work in the course of their trade. However Tasmania appears to be the only jurisdiction which has implemented the scheme as was originally intended. This has a variety of mutual recognition implications and is therefore a matter of concern.

We will be taking that up with interstate regulators in the next reporting year.

### **4.4 In-House Licensing**

The Board has spent some time on the question of in-house licensing, which would require an organisation that performs internal electrical work to hold a form of restricted contractor's licence. An example might be a manufacturing plant which re-wires its office block or installs new process plant. Under the present regulations there is no need for a licence for this type of work, as no contract is involved.

Some states require a form of licence to be held, on the basis that without a licence:

- a great deal of electrical work would bypass the inspection system; and
- many electrical workers would miss out on information sent out to update contractors on regulation and standards changes.

On the other hand it can also be argued that internal electrical work is well covered by the organisation's duty of care under OH&S legislation, and other processes can be used to update electrical workers. Further, this area is covered by Workplace Standards Authority and therefore may be outside the Board's area of responsibility.

This matter may be resolved with the implementation of new notifications and inspections regulations.

### **4.5 Practical Experience**

One of the requirements for the granting of an electrical technician's licence is the ability to be able to demonstrate a level of practical Wiring Rules experience. This has always been a weakness in the licensing system, as the requirement is deemed to have been fulfilled if the applicant can present a declaration, signed by the employer, to the effect that the applicant has the experience.

There are moves in the industry to develop an experience-based profiling system which would provide a much better measure of on-the-job competency and experience, and the Board has given in-principle support for the changes. It is expected that it will take some years to implement fully.

In the meantime the Board has asked the Regulator to write to all employers of electrical apprentices outlining the requirements for Wiring Rules experience, and reinforcing the employer's responsibility in signing the declaration.

#### **4.6 Miscellaneous Licensing Activities**

Other licensing work has included the following:

- modifications to the Electrical Contractors training modules;
- attempting to define what constitutes a "fit and proper person"; and
- preliminary work on the notification and inspection regulations.

## ***5 Disciplinary Panel***

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The Regulator appointed the Disciplinary Panel on 19 March 1998 for a period of three months. These appointments were subsequently renewed for the period to 30 June 1999. The Disciplinary Panel members are:

Chair: Sonia Weidenbach

Members: Wim de Puit  
Bill Eldridge  
Allan Kenny

Support: Robert Steedman  
John Hammersley.

The Disciplinary Panel met on five occasions in the period to 30 June 1999, and determined eleven cases. It will report separately on disciplinary actions taken by the Regulator on the recommendation of the Panel.

## **6 Industry Training**

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Close liaison with the Tasmanian Electro-technology and Utilities Industry Training Board (ITB) is an essential part of the Board's operations, as the on-the-job and off-the-job training aspects are key elements of the successful delivery of a safe electricity industry.

The ELB has worked with the ITB on the following subjects:

- profiling for on-the-job competency;
- review of the present trades recognition system;
- Lift Skills National Training Package and the need for assessment; and
- Certificate III in Electrical (Electrician) and changes to the apprenticeship structure.

The Board has a good working relationship with the ITB, and acknowledges the work done by John Karsznia (ITB) and Warren Crichton (Electrical Safety Group) in the field of industry training.

## ***7 Future Issues***

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The year again saw major changes in the electrical industry in Tasmania, with the completion of the disaggregation of the supply authority and the resultant “new way of working” for many participants. It was inevitable that these major changes continued to impact on the reforms that the Board would have liked to see, yet there has been good progress.

But there is still much to be done, and we hope that the new year will see progress in the following areas:

- electrical worker safety;
- transmission and distribution network safety;
- customer electrical installation safety; and
- notifications and inspections.

The Board looks forward to assisting with the consultation process for these pieces of legislation.