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Consultation Feedback Document: Member Feedback on Step Licensing Changes

INTRODUCTION

Between March and April, Master Electricians reached out to its members to gather feedback on the proposed changes to Licensing Classes and the introduction of Step Licensing within the electrical industry. The feedback covered the anticipated impact on the industry, proposed solutions to address challenges posed by the changes, and considerations regarding the associated tradesperson license. Additionally, members provided a range of recommendations based on their insights and experiences.

The 'Step Licensing' changes have generated a variety of considerations and recommendations from industry professionals. Here's a detailed summary:

1. **Safety and Compliance:** Many respondents emphasize the need for stringent safety measures and compliance standards in implementing the step licensing changes. They stress the importance of ensuring that all electrical work is performed safely and in accordance with regulations. Suggestions include regular inspector interviews, yearly safety checks, and ongoing training to maintain competency.
2. **Clarity and Education:** There is a consensus that more information and education about the changes are necessary for industry professionals to understand their implications fully. Some suggest a clearer rollout plan with comprehensive training programs and pathways outlined to help electricians prepare for the new requirements.
3. **Grandparenting Rights:** Several respondents advocate for providing grandparenting rights to registered electrical workers with extensive experience in the industry. They argue that individuals with a proven track record should be exempt from additional training or licensing requirements.



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4. **Concerns about Rushed Implementation:** Many express concerns about the rushed implementation of the changes without adequate preparation or training in place. They stress the importance of having a framework, pathways, and training programs established before enforcing the implementation date to prevent disruptions to the electrical trade and the economy.
5. **Endorsement Framework and Specialization:** Some respondents suggest expanding the endorsement framework beyond specific areas like mining, cardiac, and solar to cover other specialized high-risk work. They propose offering additional training and endorsements for working on boiler/burner electrical systems and other areas of expertise.
6. **Collaboration and Industry Involvement:** Many emphasize the importance of involving industry leaders, businesses, and electricians themselves in the decision-making process. They believe that collaboration will result in practical solutions that address the needs and concerns of those working in the field.
7. **Simplification and Clarity:** Some respondents recommend simplifying the step licensing process and ensuring clarity in the requirements and expectations for electricians. They suggest focusing on establishing straightforward legislation and comprehensive training programs that are easy to understand and follow.
8. **Administration and Oversight:** Concerns are raised about the administrative capacity of the Electrical Workers Registration Board (EWRB) to implement and maintain the changes effectively. Some suggest improving communication and outreach efforts to ensure that industry professionals are informed and engaged in the process.
9. **Associated Tradesperson licence:** Feedback has been universally negative in regards to the addition of LBP' to this licence class, and is generally regarded as a genuine safety risk, devaluation of other licence classes, and may result in loss of work for SME's. Significant safety concerns have been raised over omission of voltage, and current restrictions.

Overall, the feedback highlights the importance of prioritizing safety, providing clarity and education, and involving industry stakeholders in the development and implementation of the step licensing changes. There is a consensus that



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Careful planning, clear communication, and collaboration are essential for the successful rollout of the new licensing framework.

More details feedback on the challenges that will be encountered as a consequence of the step licensing changes and the impacts on the industry are noted below. There was also feedback on proposed solutions to these that some members provided as response to these.

Challenges	Impacts on the Industry	Proposed Solutions
Restriction on Expansion and Retraining Costs	Increased retraining costs and limited expansion into new areas	Grandparenting provisions for experienced tradespeople
Impact on Workforce and Competency Certification	Hindered ability for trainees and apprentices to gain necessary experience and certifications	Standardized system for assessing competency, practical assessments, or case studies
Potential Loss of Work to Other Trades	Safety hazards and slower reconnection processes, impacting profitability and work quality	Stricter regulations and oversight for associated tradespeople
Administrative Burden and Compliance Challenges	Increased administrative burden and potential compliance issues	Clear communication, detailed guidelines, phased implementation
Uncertainty and Segmentation of Work	Uncertainty for existing workers and potential withdrawal from certain work segments	Defined training pathways and endorsement criteria
Safety and Quality of Work	Safety concerns due to non-compliance and hazardous work practices	Rigorous vetting processes for endorsements, ongoing supervision, periodic audits
Financial Implications and Revenue Loss	Increased costs due to additional training, compliance measures, and administrative overhead, potential revenue loss due to increased competition	Subsidies or incentives for training, maintaining strict endorsement criteria



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Challenges	Impacts on the Industry	Proposed Solutions
Training and Competency Requirements	Lack of clarity on training process and costs, hindering workers' ability to gain endorsements	Accessible and reasonably priced training options, nationwide training programs
Complexity and Lack of Clarity	Confusion and uncertainty about changes' effects on operations and workforce	Simplification of step licensing process, clear implementation details
Identification of Competent Electricians	Challenges in enforcing specialized licenses, potential devaluation of qualifications for existing tradespeople	Development of practical assessments or case studies
Cost and Accessibility of Training	Increased training costs, potential accessibility issues for small businesses and regional areas	Nationwide accessible training options, potential subsidies or incentives
Resistance to Change	General resistance to change, particularly among experienced professionals	Clear communication of change rationale, stakeholder involvement, support for transitioning
Quality and Standardization of Work	Concerns about maintaining quality standards, especially with potential increased specialization	Rigorous vetting for endorsements, ongoing supervision, periodic audits
Enforcement and Accountability	Issues with enforcement and accountability, especially where non-licensed individuals perform electrical work	Robust inspection processes, third-party oversight, documentation requirements
Timeliness and Clarity of Implementation	Concerns about implementation timeline and clarity, potential delays and confusion	Clear communication, phased implementation, detailed guidelines
Training Pathways and Providers	Availability and suitability of training pathways, ensuring relevant and accessible training programs	Collaboration between regulatory bodies and training providers
Equity and Accessibility	Ensuring endorsement process does not disproportionately disadvantage small businesses or individuals in regional areas, promoting equity and accessibility	Support mechanisms like subsidies or flexible training options



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