

# Electrical licensing

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This electrical note sets out the system of electrical licensing in the ACT.

### Legal basis

The Construction Occupations Section (COS) of ACT Planning and Land Authority (the Authority) administers the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004. This electrical note describes the regulatory framework for electrical licensing from 1 September 2004.

### What work requires an electrical licence?

An ACT licence is required to carry out most electrical wiring work in the ACT. This includes the wiring work involved in installing electrical equipment.

### When does electrical work not require an electrical licence?

A licence is not required for:

- Work on an electricity network
- Work on telecommunications cabling and equipment under 90 volts
- Work on extra low voltage electrical installations (installations up to 50 volts a.c. or up to 120 V ripple-free d.c.)
- Work on electrical equipment that has been disconnected from the electricity supply
- Connecting or disconnecting electrical equipment to an electricity supply with a plug and supply cord or cable and working on the cables or cords used to connect the equipment.

### Work under supervision and direction

An apprentice or trainee in electrical wiring can do electrical wiring work under the direction or supervision of an electrician. The electrician must hold an unrestricted electrician's licence. The supervisor ensures that the apprentice or trainee gets sufficient

instruction to ensure that the work is carried out safely and correctly. The supervisor must be available and at hand to assist the apprentice or trainee. It is the supervisor who must be satisfied that the work has in fact been carried out safely and correctly.

### Kinds of licence

The following licences are issued in the ACT:

- Electrical contractor's licence
- Unrestricted electrician's licence
- Restricted electrician's licence

### Electrical contractor's licence

Contractors' licenses can be issued to companies or partnerships as well as individual persons who hold an unrestricted electrician's licence.

A partnership must include a partner who has an unrestricted electrician's licence who will act as the nominee for the partnership. When applying for a partnership licence written evidence of existence of the partnership must be produced.

A company must have a director or employee who has an unrestricted electrician's licence who is willing to be the nominee for the company. When applying for a company licence a recent 'Historical Company Extract' from the *Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)* must be provided. ASIC's address is: 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 15 London Circuit, Canberra City or via the Internet on [www.asic.gov.au](http://www.asic.gov.au).

### Unrestricted electrician's licence

This licence allows the holder to carry out any electrical wiring work. To obtain an unrestricted electrician's licence requires both theoretical knowledge and practical experience of electrical wiring work. The standard current qualification is Certificate III in Electrotechnology Systems Electrician.

Gaining this qualification provides both theoretical and practical training.

Older electrical trade certificates in combination with the completion of an apprenticeship or a recognised contract of training that covers electrical wiring are also acceptable.

Qualifications in electrical engineering will also satisfy the requirement for theoretical training. Applicants need to be eligible for corporate membership of the Institute of Engineers, Australia.

### **Electrician's permit**

If a person applies for an unrestricted electrician's licence and is qualified in electrical theory but does not have appropriate practical experience, they may be issued an unrestricted electrician's permit. They can then carry out electrical work under supervision until they can show they have sufficient experience. The minimum is twelve months experience. The employer can write a letter that describes what electrical wiring work the person has carried out.

### **Supervision of work under an electrical permit**

A person who holds an unrestricted electrician's licence must provide the supervision.

### **Restricted electrician's licence**

Restricted electrical licenses allow people to carry out electrical work incidental to their trade. The restricted licence is endorsed with the name of the trade. The trades are:

- Plumbing and gas fitting
- Refrigeration and air conditioning
- Mechanical fitting
- Electrical fitting
- Type B gas appliance fitting

The Authority has a separate Electrical Note on restricted electrical licenses.

### **Recognition of prior learning**

Persons who are partially qualified may have their qualifications assessed under the new system of training through the Utilities and Light Manufacturing Industry Training Board.

Persons who are partially qualified may have their qualifications assessed under the old system of training through the CIT, which will check their theoretical knowledge and contact the Utilities and Light Manufacturing Industry Training Board for assessment of the person's on-the-job skills.

Persons can then do courses or pass an exam to cover any gaps in their off-the-job training.

### **Mutual recognition**

Persons, who hold an electrician's licence in another part of Australia or in New Zealand, are entitled to an ACT electrician's licence that allows them to carry out the equivalent work. They must complete a form, provide the current licence from which they want mutual recognition, of which a copy will be made, then pay a fee. If they hold a licence in more than one other place, they must tell COS about all of them but they need only provide an original of one licence.

Mutual recognition does not apply to companies or partnerships.

### **Overseas qualifications**

Overseas qualifications can be accepted but they must have been independently assessed before being treated as an equivalent of the qualifications given above for theoretical training. The person may still be required to show that they have practical experience.

### **Individuals not eligible to be licensed**

An individual is not eligible to be licensed if the applicant has been found guilty of an offence that involves fraud or dishonesty and is punishable by imprisonment for at least a year.

For a partnership this test applies to all partners. For a company it applies to all directors.

The Registrar may suspend or not issue a licence to an individual or partnership if they become bankrupt or a company if it enters into a winding up stage.

### **Advertising**

When advertising electrical wiring services you must use the name recorded on the

licence, the licence number and if a corporation the ACN number.

If an unrestricted electrician does not hold an electrical contractor's licence but is advertising electrical wiring services they must not use the term 'electrical contractor'. However, they may advertise as a licensed electrician.

### Insurance

Before providing an electrical wiring service to clients licensees must give their clients evidence of what insurance they hold in relation to the service they are providing.

The licensee may ask the client to sign an acknowledgement that the client has been told about their insurance. The acknowledgement must state the time and date it was given. The licensee must immediately give the client a copy of the acknowledgement.

The registrar may assume the client was not told if a dispute arises about the insurance and the above acknowledgment is not produced.

A licensee is considered to have given evidence of insurance if the details of the insurance are in the telephone directory or by having the details on the vehicle used to provide the electrical wiring services.

### Terms of licences

An unrestricted electrician's licence and electrical contractor's licence are valid for three years. However applicants may apply for a one year licence but this will incur additional cost in proportion to a three year licence. An electrical permit is valid for one year. Renewal involves filling out a form and paying a fee. Application for renewal must be made before the old licence expires. If it is not, the licence must be applied for again.

### How much are the fees?

The current application and licence fees appear in the Authority's Fees and Charges booklet. It is available on the COS Internet site or at the COS licensing counter. Fees usually change in July each year.

### Carrying out electrical wiring work

When an electrician or electrical contractor carries out electrical wiring the work must be

done in accordance with the *Australian/New Zealand Wiring Rules* (Australian Standard AS/NZS 3000) and tested in accordance with *Electrical Installations—Testing guidelines* (AS/NZS 3017). Then the person responsible must report the results of the test to both COS and the owner of the installation. Some exceptions are listed below. The person responsible for the work must keep a further copy of the report for two years. The report must reach COS within 14 days of testing the work for compliance with AS/NZS 3000.

COS provides forms in three copies (a "Certificate of Electrical Safety") that must be used for reports. There is a fee for these certificates when purchasing them in book form.

A Certificate of Electrical Safety may be lodged at COS over the Internet. The address is <https://www.trading.act.gov.au/CC>. There is no charge for these certificates if lodged over the Internet.

### Electrical wiring work that does not have to be reported

Some kinds of electrical work need not be reported to COS:

- Disconnection of an appliance or a fitting
- Disconnection and reconnection of an appliance or a fitting if the electrical load does not increase
- Replacement of an appliance or an accessory if the electrical load does not increase.

The work still needs to comply with AS/NZS 3000.

### Inspection of electrical wiring work

Electrical inspectors from COS may inspect electrical wiring work that has been reported as recently completed. Electrical inspectors will always inspect part of a new installation and will inspect a proportion of the work of all electrical workers. The electricity distributor will not supply power to a new installation until the inspection has taken place. Electrical inspectors may also inspect other electrical installations or electrical equipment to see if they are safe.

**Further information**

Applications forms for licences and further information and advice are available from the COS licensing counter at:

Ground floor north  
Dame Pattie Menzies House  
16 Challis Street  
Dickson ACT 2602  
Ph: 02 6207 8096  
Fax: 02 6207 6324

and the ACT Planning and Land Authority  
website [www.actpla.act.gov.au](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au)