

TELIT Cabling Newsletter ©

May 2019

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Industry Responses to the ACMA CPR Cabling review and the national VET Review - Where to from here?

Outcomes from the ACMA review into cabling will not be known for some time. What is known is that almost all industry submissions – these are on the ACMA website – supported continuation of CPRs, with enhancements to auditing, inspections and training. This reflects industry concerns over the quality of work on customer's premises cabling.

Reduced longer term training options with short contracting cycles, where most of the work is by non-salaried staff, with tight margins, is a real concern. No longer are Telstra or state agencies in electricity, gas, rail, water and roads, training to state and national standards and "exporting" skills to the private sector. As the impact of a reduced skills pool, from privatisation of public assets bite, ageing adds to the mix and we urgently need new policies to address skills needs. Not 457 visas!

Codes of Practice, some voluntary, some mandatory, have assisted in delivery of improved quality in many industries. TITAB works with registries, enterprises, and other industry stakeholders, to lift quality and through ADTIA, other registrars and the International Copper Association of Australia (ICAA) have drafted a revised *Industry Code for Enterprises*. However, a number of "legalistic" issues have been raised by ACMA with the recent draft and ADTIA is reviewing the situation.

The digital economy has also introduced some new ingredients to the skills mix. TITAB and industry stakeholders are concerned with some gig economy operators such as *AIRTASKER* - a recent court decision outcome is on page 4. The core issue is that *AIRTASKER* should not just act as a conduit for electricians, telecommunications/data cablers and other trades, without accepting any responsibility for vetting, to ensure that the trades person offered is licensed and registered with regulators.

VET (Vocational Education & Training) was in the Federal Election party campaigns with other education sectors and training policies, but light on with specifics. Whether actual job vacancies could be provided, given the current challenges with short term contracting, is a moot point.

We urgently need an updated national VET system to fill the gaps now showing from past policies and a regulatory framework that facilitates this, particularly as the NBN transitions from a "build" to "operate" phase and more focus will be on customer premises cabling!

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Registered cablers website. Useful information for cablers and consumers!

TITAB Australia is in a consortium supporting the *Registered Cablers Website*, www.registeredcablers.com.au. This site has useful information for cablers, vendors and customers. Some add on services for cablers are available.

“Smart Wired” in telecommunications! CPR registered cablers access.

The “electrical” sector has been using the marketing advantages of Smart Wiring for some time, but the trademark can also help CPR registered cablers. *Smart Wired* is copyright and owned by the ICAA (International Copper Association Australia).

Now TITAB ACMA CPR registered cablers - with mandated endorsements/specialist competencies - are able to use the facility at no cost. We have an agreement with the trademark owners and it is intended as an aid to quality improvement and accountability. It provides some advantages to the “good guys” and is particularly useful for sole traders and small contractors, by providing:-

- Access to “Smart Wired” booklets - **Home Wiring Essentials, Quick Guides** and the **Installer Handbook** to aid better communications with customers.

- TITAB Registered Cablers meeting the endorsement criteria – Structured and Co-Axial (and fibre if used) – when installing cabling that meets the minimum requirements of the **Home Wiring Essentials** on communications or entertainment installations, can sign off that the home is *Smart Wired* with the **Smart Wired Logo** - which is downloadable from the website – and leave it in a suitable location such as a terminal box.

The mandated ACMA Compliance Form TCA1 (and optional TCA2) still needs to be given to the customer. In the event of any future litigation, omission works against the cabler. The smart wired website is www.smartwiredhouse.com.au and the ICAA are on www.copper.com.au

Is your registration expired?

If you are uncertain of your expiry date you can check details on the TITAB website at www.titab.com.au

TITAB notifies cablers of their registration renewal approximately 6 weeks before their expiry date. It is therefore important that we have current addresses and contact points.

If you want to have your registration renewed in a timely manner please notify our office of any changes to your address, email or phone numbers. There have been occasions where cablers have had their employment jeopardized because they are unregistered.

By updating any changes you won't miss out on our newsletters, which have the latest industry news. You can update your details via phone on 03 9631 0800 or by email at: info@titab.com.au.

Working in a roof space, WA and QLD regulations!

Recently, in our April eTELIT, we advised that Queensland was in the process of drafting regulations to apply new rules for working in a Roof Space. These regulations are similar to those already in operation in WA which came into effect on 1 July 2018.

TITAB has obtained clarification on requirements for telecommunications and electrical cablers to ensure compliance with what is really a sensible rule – that is, turn the power off!

Other states and territories have rules for confined spaces that are often applicable to roof space, but not necessarily specific on power safety. On receipt of notification that Queensland proposed to introduce a regulatory amendment to the Electrical Safety Regulation, similar to WA, TITAB contacted the WA authority to seek advice.

We thank the WA and Queensland authorities for their advice, which is in summary; that there are no requirements for persons who are required to work in a Roof Space to undertake any specific training, such as the “Restricted Electrical Licence.

All workers must comply with the new regulations for working in Roof Spaces and it actually applies to other work - not just electrical work - carried out within the roof space of residential and commercial premises that have been converted from residential premises. This requirement does not apply to work carried out on top of the roof of a property.

The WA Electrical and Utilities Industry consultant advised TITAB of examples of work that might be done in the roof space and that includes:

- electrical work (including cabling)
- gasfitting;
- plumbing;
- installation, upgrade or removal of insulation;
- building security, structural and vermin inspection activity;
- roof and ceiling repair;
- and any other activity in the roof space.

De-energising a home or small commercial premises means switching off at the meter box.

The Queensland advice goes on: “A licensed electrician is not required to achieve de-energisation, given that it can be achieved by switching off the main switch on the switchboard. It is the duty of the person conducting the business or undertaking (PCBU) to ensure de-energisation has occurred, and it is not necessary to engage a licensed electrician to discharge this duty”.

Regardless of some states and territories not being as specific on de-powering as WA and QLD, it is always good practice to de-power, as mandated in those states. Roof spaces can be dangerous enough without electrocution risks.

Carriers, industry bodies urge ACMA to strengthen customer cabling regulations!

(The following article is an extract from the Communications Day newsletter 1 April 2019)

NBN Co, Telstra and a number of key cabling industry bodies have urged the Australian Communications and Media Authority to strengthen regulation over customer cabling, with calls for more independent auditing and increased training.

The ACMA has just held an inquiry into whether the current arrangements are suitable given the changes in the telecommunications environment over the years. The review focussed on the cabling work on the customer premise rather than within the carrier networks.

NBN Co noted in a submission that telcos often have limited visibility on the customer side of the network boundary point, even though it plays a crucial part of customer experience.

“The standard to which these tasks are conducted have been demonstrated to have an impact on the performance of carriage services, including services provided over the NBN network. The cabling industry therefore plays an important role in maintaining the quality of the overall end-to-end performance of a consumer’s in-premises telecommunications experience,” NBN stated.

NBN is calling for the current co-regulatory framework to remain in place, with the ACMA actively participating by ensuring participants in the cabling industry comply with their obligations to maintain appropriate standards of cabling quality.

“Other impacts brought about by poor customer cabling are also important, including its impact on end to end network performance. This should also be monitored and standards enforced where necessary to ensure appropriate network performance accountability is clear, and delivered, across industries,” it said in its submission.

Telstra also highlighted the impact that poor customer cabling can have on quality of service and called for a mandatory registration system for cablers. “Mandatory registration ensures all cablers have achieved and maintain an appropriate level of training,” Telstra said. “While some may argue mandatory registration is overly burdensome, we believe it is the most efficient way to ensure all cabling is carried out safely and in accordance with the Australian and Communications Alliance standards.”

INDUSTRY BODIES WEIGH IN: If anything, the cabling bodies themselves were more strident about ACMA's regulatory role and the need for more compliance activity.

TITAB Australia – an ACMA-accredited cabler registry service for the telecommunications industry with around 30,000 cablers on its books – commented that the current ACMA cabling provider rules system was not onerous for cablers, is cost effective overall and can provide a level of protection for customers, cablers and the network itself. However, it stated that the current 35% non-compliance with the rules would not be tolerated in any other utility or regulated industry.

“There needs to be an improvement in performance of the system and for instance, the ACMA auditing and inspection function has been drastically downgraded over recent years and is directly contributing to the poor levels of compliance; some in safety related areas,” TITAB stated.

“The levels of training and skills of the workforce are also not providing the standard of service desired by the public. This has ramifications for compliance, as reflected in the outcomes of the small scale random audits conducted recently by ACMA and the feedback from cablers to the ACMA on line survey and surveys by registrars and the Australian Digital and Telecommunications Industry Association.”

TITAB has called for the ACMA to reinstate a system of random audits of installations to monitor compliance levels, and to reinstate a system that enables field inspections to be undertaken on advice to the ACMA of a non-compliant installation, where safety risks are believed to be present.

The ADTIA – whose board now includes Telstra, Optus, Foxtel and Downer Group – also made a submission in favour of keeping the current ACMA cabling rules with some enhancements. It said that cabling rules are part of the minimum standards in the industry and suggested the cablers appreciate its value. However, according to its own survey the cablers have indicated they want the rules strengthened through added specialist competencies and endorsements and external industry audits.

“The need for a sound well-functioning ACMA administered co-regulatory framework is of vital importance to an industry that continues to undergo huge growth and development – as commercial pressures increase there is an effect on workers capabilities diminishing and productivity declining,” ADTIA said.

NEW RULES PROPOSED: Communications Alliance has just announced that the two draft Standards DR AS/CA S008:2019 Requirements for customer cabling products and DR AS/CA S009:2019 Installation requirements for customer cabling (Wiring rules) have been released for public comment. The two draft Standards, together with an accompanying background paper and details on how to submit comments, can be found in the Public Comment section of the Communications Alliance website. The public comment period closes at 5.00 pm (AEST) on 24 May 2019.



\$100,000 fine for Airtasker fake electrician!



TITAB and other telecommunications stakeholders have expressed concern to regulators over the practice of *Airtasker* to ignore regulatory requirements for trades-based referrals.

The following case advised to us by NECA is of interest to cablers:-

“A man who posed as a qualified electrician to get work in homes around south-east Queensland has been fined \$100,000 in the Brisbane Magistrates Court.

*Amilcar Appel posed as a qualified electrician on the online marketplace **Airtasker** and advertised electrical services to households in the greater Brisbane area between November 2015 and June 2017. However, he had never held an electrical contractor licence or any qualifications to perform electrical work.*

The Electrical Safety Office (ESO) received a complaint about Appel’s work after a licensed electrician found substantially defective work in a home which Appel had been paid to complete through Airtasker.

An ESO investigation established that Appel had conducted similar unlicensed and non-compliant electrical work at a further eight addresses through Airtasker.

Appel, who failed to make an appearance in court, was convicted and ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine for thirteen offences under the Electrical Safety Act 2002.”

The risk of death and serious injury was highlighted in the Magistrates decision.

“Head of Queensland’s Electrical Safety Office, Victoria Thomson, said the sentencing served as an important reminder to everyone to check their electrical contractor is licensed.”

“Faulty wiring or unlicensed electrical work can cost you thousands of dollars to fix up and in some cases, void your home insurance. Worse still, it can put you and your family in serious danger of electric shock or a house fire.”

“The electrical licences register and information on penalties under Queensland’s electrical safety laws is at electricalsafety.qld.gov.au.”

The same principles apply to telecommunications/data cablers. The risk to customers is highlighted in the Magistrates decision, but an unregistered telecoms/data cabler also runs the additional risk of serious litigation if faulty cabling causes an alarm fail or other serious problems and Airtasker will leave this cabler high and dry!

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