



**Department of Consumer  
and Employment Protection**

Government of Western Australia

**EnergySafety**

## **The Policy Framework for the Granting of Restricted Electrical Licences in WA**

This paper explains the Restricted Electrical Licensing scheme policy framework for the granting of restricted electrical licences in WA. It replaces the policy framework previously used by the Electrical Licensing Board.

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## **1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

Western Australia has for many years had in place a “restricted electrical licensing system” which allows persons other than electricians (who are ‘A’ grade electrical worker licence holders, able to work on any electrical equipment or installation) to legally perform a “restricted” range of electrical tasks.

The previous restricted licensing system used by the Electrical Licensing Board (ELB) to issue restricted licences was referred to as the National Restricted Electrical Licensing (NREL) system, the principles of which were adopted during 1991. Prior to the introduction of the NREL system, the Board issued “R” and “L” licences.

Due to concerns that the NREL system was not operating as efficiently and effectively as it should, the Director of Energy Safety concluded, after consultation with the ELB, that it was desirable to formalise the proposed improvements in a draft policy paper and issue it for industry and public comment. This occurred during April 2003.

Feedback from industry in respect of the proposed changes was very positive, resulting in the Director deciding to adopt the proposed policy framework without significant change.

The policy framework was implemented by the Electrical Licensing Board on 22 July 2003.

All existing and new licences are now referred to as “Restricted Electrical Licences” (REL).

## **2 GENERAL**

### **2.1 Conversion of Existing Licences**

Many of the earlier “R” and “L” licences issued will be progressively converted to equivalent new licences.

Once completed, merging the old-type restricted licences into the current system will result in a single, integrated WA restricted licensing system, reducing confusion and simplifying administration.

### **2.2 Reviews of Electrical Licensing Board Decisions**

There is a formal review process, to allow persons aggrieved by a decision of the ELB:

- To not grant a licence; or
- To not grant the type of licence being sought (but instead another type); or
- To not grant an endorsement on a licence (or similar),

the opportunity to request an independent review. Requests for reviews should be made in writing to the Director of Energy Safety.

## **3 VOLTAGE RANGE FOR RESTRICTED ELECTRICAL WORK**

The allowable voltage range for restricted electrical work has been increased from 650 volts to 1000 volts, in line with recent Australian Standards changes related to the definition of “low voltage”.

## 4 LICENCE TYPES

To assist applicants, administration staff and the Board to administer the *2003 Restricted Electrical Licensing Policy*, eight types of restricted licence have been created. When making application to obtain a restricted electrical licence, an applicant has the option of one of the following licence types. **Should more than one licence be required, a separate application for each licence must be submitted.**

The eight licence types are:

1. Plug and Cord Connected Equipment Licence
2. Domestic Appliances Licence (includes stoves)
3. Disconnect and Reconnect Licence
4. Disconnect and Reconnect plus Appliances Licence
5. Plumbing Worker's Licence
6. Plumbing and Gasfitting Worker's Licence
7. Refrigeration and Airconditioning Mechanic's Licence
8. Instrument Process Control Technician's Licence

Details of the allowable scope of work for each licence type are in this document.

## 5 APPLICATION FOR A RESTRICTED ELECTRICAL LICENCE

An applicant must be able to provide answers to the following questions in his or her application:

- (a) What will be the type of electrical work performed?
- (b) Will the electrical work be performed regularly?
- (c) How will the "on-the-job" supervision part of the training be carried out?

Each question is important in respect of the safety (competency) requirements for licensing (other than for cord/cable and plug licences, as covered in the preceding section). The information thus obtained by the ELB about the occupation and work of the applicant is to be used only in that safety context.

In respect of (a) above, the important issue is that the applicant must clearly identify the type of electrical work to be carried out and the work environment. Therefore, if a person states (say) that he or she is a mechanical fitter and intends to operate as a free-lance contractor carrying out industrial plant repair and servicing work, including reconnects/disconnects of motors, then supporting the application with details of the earlier training as a mechanical fitter is useful (but not essential – the issue is the electrical work, not the other type of work).

The ELB will not place any emphasis on whether the restricted electrical work to be carried out is electrical work "*incidental to the person's trade or calling*".

In respect of (b) above, applicants need to explain how often they expect to perform the proposed electrical work, so that competency is maintained. The ELB does not have any formal benchmarks in this respect, but if a licence holder performs (say) restricted electrical work only two or three times per year or less, it is likely to be seen as insufficiently supporting skills maintenance, or assuring safety outcomes. This is consistent with the existing policy.

With respect to the number of licences that can be held by an individual, the ELB has a general policy of a limit of two restricted licences per person.

The application also needs to include advice from the employer (or self-employed person) setting out how the training and on-the-job supervision will be achieved. As a matter of general policy, supervision must be carried out by a licence holder of same or greater licence scope, in the same Work Area Category (as per previous policy). An alternative is to be supervised by an 'A' grade electrical worker (electrician).

## 6 TRAINING MODULES

Licences that are granted have a realistic scope for the specified work area category. The scopes of work on the licences have matching training modules to ensure the appropriate training is received for the specified scope of work as approved by the Board.

Summaries of the training modules that match the scope of work that the Board may approve an applicant to train for or be assessed for are as follows:

- 1 Occupational safety and health (OSH) procedures associated with electrical work are followed (mandatory for each application)
- 2 Fixed wired equipment, which is connected to a supply of up to **1000 volts**, is disconnected and reconnected
- 3 a Faults are located and rectified in **electric motors**, which are connected to a single phase, **240 volt** supply (*training module 5 as a prerequisite and is **only** applicable to equipment connected by cord and plug*)
- 3 b Faults are located and rectified in **water heaters**, which are connected to a single phase, **240 volt** supply (*has training module 5 as a prerequisite and is **only** applicable to work area category Plumbing and Gasfitting Equipment*)
- 3 c Faults are located and rectified in **appliances**, which are connected to a single phase, **240 volt** supply (*has training module 5 as a prerequisite and is **only** applicable to equipment connected by cord and plug*)
- 4 a Faults are located and rectified in **electric motors**, which are connected to a supply of up to **1000 volts** (*has training module 6 as a prerequisite and is **only** applicable to equipment connected by flexible cable and plug*)
- 5 Flexible cord and plug is attached to equipment, which is connected to a single phase **240 volt** supply
- 6 Flexible cord and plug is attached to equipment, which is connected to a supply of up to **1000 volts**

## 7 WORK AREA CATEGORIES (WAC)

The REL system is based on applicants being trained to achieve standardised Units of Competence (UoC) corresponding to the Scope of Allowable Work for the types of restricted licences, and being permitted to apply this competence in designated Work Area Categories (WAC[s]). (Eg Industrial Equipment or Commercial Equipment.) Details on the licences describe the scope of allowable work that can be performed within the approved WAC.

Generally, licences will initially be endorsed with only one WAC. An exception would be where applicants claim and can substantiate that they are required to perform REL work in more than one WAC, or they are self-employed offering services to more than one WAC.

A licence with one WAC can be later endorsed with an additional WAC, up to a maximum of two WAC(s), providing applicants can demonstrate having had at least 15 hours training and are competent in the additional WAC. Where applicants apply for licences to have an additional WAC and currently have more than one existing WAC, they will be required to surrender the other WAC(s).

The rationale for this policy position is that whilst the basic skill and knowledge for a particular kind of work (such as “disconnect/reconnect”) referred to in the training module is generic and transferable from one WAC to another WAC (such as commercial environment to the industrial environment) there is a need to ensure:

- Licence holders are familiar with the work environment of each WAC specified on licences, as the detail of work practices may differ (e.g. the type of equipment or cabling types may be different); and
- The on-the-job skill is acquired through supervised experience and is not instantly acquired in the new work environment.

A minimum period of 15 hours (2 days) is generally considered adequate to adapt to the basics of a new WAC environment, although it needs to be seen as a minimum as some applicants may require longer supervision.

This policy approach is considered equitable in that it recognises generic skills and knowledge for REL work can be successfully transferred from one work environment to another, although given the limited training that restricted licence holders receive, some additional training under supervision is required.

Applicants applying for an additional WAC for the fitting and repairing of cords/cables and plugs are not required to work under supervision for 15 hours, as these competencies are transferable.

As the NREL system has been superseded by the REL system, NREL holders applying for additional WAC(s) or required to perform additional REL work will have their licences converted to a comparable REL system.

In order to meet the requirements for an additional WAC and/or to perform additional REL work, applicants are required to apply for approval to undertake the training whilst under supervision of either a restricted licence holder with the relevant WAC and UoC/Scope of Allowable Work **OR** an ‘A’ Grade electrical worker.

To assist with the understanding and maintaining consistency applying to WAC’s, the following definitions applies as part of the REL policy framework:

- Commercial Equipment - includes retail outlets and warehouses;
- Industrial Equipment - includes factories, industrial plants and mines.

## 8 LICENCE TYPE DESCRIPTIONS

### 8.1 Plug and Cord Connected Equipment Licence

A “Plug and Cord Connected Equipment Licence” allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

**Scope of allowable work:**

1. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 240 V equipment connected by cord and plug only (*training module 3A or 3C*)
2. Attach flexible cord and plug up to 240 V equipment (*training module 5*)
3. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 1000 V equipment connected by cable and plug only (*training module 4A*)
4. Attach flexible cable and plug up to 1000 V equipment (*training module 6*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are** 1, 3A and/or 3C, 4A, 5 & 6. The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

**The work area categories that are applicable to this licence type are:**

- Domestic Equipment
- Commercial Equipment
- Industrial Equipment
- Communication/Computing Equipment
- Laboratory Scientific Equipment
- Office Equipment

An applicant is required to indicate which work area category best suits their work when applying for the licence.

**Eligible applicants include (but are not limited to)** gas fitters, catering appliance repairers, tool repairers, electronic technicians and theatre technicians.

### 8.2 Domestic Appliances Licence (includes stoves)

A “Domestic Appliances Licence” allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

**Scope of allowable work:**

1. Disconnect and reconnect fixed wired cooking appliances only (*training module 2*)
2. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in 240 V appliances connected by cord and plug and fixed wired cooking appliances only (*training module 3A and/or 3C*)
3. Attach flexible cord and plug to 240 V equipment (*training module 5*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are** 1, 2, 3A and/or 3C & 5. The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

**The work area category that is applicable to this licence type is:**

- Domestic Equipment

An applicant is required to indicate this work area category when applying for the licence.

**Eligible applicants include (but are not limited to)** white goods repairers.

### 8.3 Disconnect and Reconnect Licence

A “Disconnect and Reconnect Licence” allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

#### Scope of allowable work:

1. Disconnect and reconnect fixed wired equipment up to 1000 V, limited to like-for-like replacement of motors, solenoids, pressure switches and LV to ELV isolating transformers (*training module 2*)
2. Attach flexible cord and plug to 240 V equipment (*training module 5*)
3. Attach flexible cable and plug to 1000 V equipment (*training module 6*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are 1, 2, 5 & 6.** The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

#### The work area categories that are applicable to this licence type are:

- Industrial Equipment
- Commercial Equipment
- Communication/Computing Equipment
- Laboratory Scientific Equipment

An applicant is required to indicate which work area category best suits their work when applying for the licence.

**Eligible applicants include (but are not limited to)** mechanical fitters, irrigation repairers, fuel bowser repairers.

### 8.4 Disconnect and Reconnect plus Appliances Licence

A “Disconnect and Reconnect plus Appliances Licence” allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

#### Scope of allowable work:

1. Disconnect and reconnect fixed wired equipment up to 1000 V, limited to like-for-like replacement of motors rated not greater than 22 kW, solenoids, pressure switches and LV to ELV isolating transformers (*training module 2*)
2. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 240 V equipment connected by cord and plug only (*training module 3A and/or 3C*)
3. Attach flexible cord and plug to 240 V equipment (*training module 5*)
4. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 1000 V equipment connected by cable and plug only (*training module 4A*)
5. Attach flexible cable and plug to 1000 V equipment (*training module 6*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are 1, 2, 3A and/or 3C, 4A, 5 & 6.** The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

#### The work area categories that are applicable to this licence type are:

- Industrial Equipment
- Commercial Equipment
- Office Equipment
- Communication/Computing Equipment
- Laboratory Scientific Equipment

An applicant is required to indicate which work area category best suits their work when applying for the licence.

**Eligible applicants include (but are not limited to)** catering appliance repairers, pool equipment repairers, specialist electronic technicians, office equipment repairers.

### **Additional Information Regarding a Disconnect and Reconnect Licence**

Additional information to define the scope of work for **disconnect and reconnect licences** is:

1. Circuit identification and isolation (eg. at a switchboard), then testing necessary to confirm the safe isolation of the equipment (up to 1000 volts, single or three phase) to be disconnected/reconnected.
2. The disconnection/reconnection (see Note 1) of allowable electrical equipment (eg. motor or water heater elements) from fixed electrical wiring.
3. Replacement of allowable equipment on a like-for-like basis, prior to reconnection.
4. Testing as necessary (eg. polarity, earth continuity) to confirm safe operation of equipment after reconnection, followed by re-energising of circuit, then final checking of safe operation.

### **NOTES**

- 1 The work can equally be connect/disconnect, such as for equipment manufacture/repair testing purposes.
- 2 Allowable electrical equipment as referred to is any component part of an installation such as motors, appliances, instrumentation etc. Electrical equipment that is outside the scope of restricted electrical work includes the component parts of fixed wiring and associated switchgear, accessories and lighting fittings.
- 3 The Disconnect/Reconnect and Disconnect/Reconnect plus Appliances licences do not cover the locating and rectifying of faults in the equipment itself, other than to identify that a piece of equipment (eg. a motor) has failed and requires replacement on a like-for-like basis. Locating and rectifying faults only applies to equipment connected by cord and plug.

### **8.5 Plumbing and Gasfitting Worker's Licence**

This licence type requires evidence that the applicant is currently licensed in Western Australia as a plumber and gas fitter.

If the applicants are gas fitters only, they do not qualify for this type of licence. A gas fitter may make application for a plug and cord connected equipment licence.

A "Plumbing and Gasfitting Worker's Licence" allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

#### **Scope of work:**

1. Disconnect and reconnect fixed wired hot water systems and evaporative air conditioners up to 1000 V, limited to like-for-like replacement of heating elements, thermostats, solenoids and motors (*training module 2*)
2. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 240 V water and gas services equipment connected by cord and plug only (*training module 3B and 3C*)
3. Attach flexible cord and plug to 240 V gas/water services equipment (*training module 5*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are 1, 2, 3B and/or 3C & 5.** The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

**The work area category that is applicable to this licence type is Water and Gas Services Equipment.**

**Eligible applicants MUST be** a currently licensed WA plumber **AND** gas fitter.

## 8.6 Plumbing Worker's Licence

This licence type requires evidence that the applicant is currently licensed in Western Australia as a plumber.

A "Plumbing Worker's Licence" allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

### Scope of work:

1. Disconnect and reconnect fixed wired hot water systems and evaporative air conditioners up to 1000 V, limited to like-for-like replacement of heating elements, thermostats, solenoids and motors (*training module 2*)
2. Locate and replace faulty electrical components on a like-for-like basis in up to 240 V water services equipment connected by cord and plug only (*training module 3B and 3C*)
3. Attach flexible cord and plug to 240 V water services equipment (*training module 5*)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring.

**The training modules that are applicable to this licence type are 1, 2, 3B and/or 3C & 5.** The training module that is relevant to each part of the scope of work is stated in brackets.

**The work area category that is applicable to this licence type is Water Services Equipment.**

**Eligible applicants MUST be** a currently licensed WA plumber.

## 8.7 Refrigeration and Airconditioning Mechanic's Licence (R&AC Licence)

This licence type requires evidence that the applicant has gained recognised trade qualifications.

If the applicants are not trade qualified, they do not qualify for this type of licence. They may make application for another type of licence.

A "Refrigeration and Airconditioning Mechanic Licence" allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

### Scope of work for Refrigeration & Airconditioning (R&AC) electrical work:

1. Disconnect/reconnect R&AC equipment
2. Flexible cords/cables and plugs work re: R&AC
3. Fault find R&AC power and control circuits
4. Modify, replace or repair within the R&AC "package"
5. Modify R&AC control circuits in switchboards/panels
6. Assemble factory supplied cable between R&AC split system components (up to 4kW)

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring, except as stated above.

**The work area category that is applicable to this licence type is Refrigeration and Airconditioning Equipment Electrical Work.**

**Eligible applicants MUST provide** trade qualifications as a "Refrigeration and Airconditioning Mechanic" (with demonstrated competencies to match the above scope of work).

Training competencies/modules should be achieved during a formal R&AC apprenticeship, if not an assessment based on the above scope of work is available through Swan College of TAFE Carlisle Campus.

### **Additional Information Regarding a Refrigeration and Airconditioning Mechanic's Licence**

As a significant improvement to the previous system, this new category of restricted electrical licence is introduced, as an extension to the previous R&AC WAC.

This licence will allow the holder to:

1. Perform all the functions of a "disconnect/reconnect" licence;
2. Install, replace and repair flexible cords/cables and plugs connected to electrical equipment;
3. Perform general fault-finding in relation to power and control circuits associated with R&AC equipment and to assess the type of corrective action required;
4. Modify, replace (not only on a like-for-like basis) or repair within "packaged" R&AC units or R&AC "packaged" plant, any electrical components;
5. Modify control circuits for refrigeration and air conditioning equipment in switchboards and control panels generally; and
6. In the particular (and common) case of "split system" airconditioning units with up to 4kw electrical input, assemble and fix into place the factory supplied cables between the two parts of the package unit, as the entire unit (fan coil, connecting cables/pipes and condenser unit) is considered to be a "package unit".

However, such licensees are not permitted to carry out the installation, initial connection and commissioning, replacement or modification of any field wiring (ie. fixed wiring) or other part of the electrical installation external to "package" R&AC equipment, such as the power supply cables to a chiller set or low voltage 240 volt field wiring to remote sensors/actuators. This is general electrical installation work requiring detailed knowledge of AS/NZS 3000 "Wiring Rules" and thus is outside the scope of refrigeration and air conditioning related restricted electrical work as defined above.

Also, licence holders are permitted to modify control circuits within refrigeration and air conditioning switchboards and control panels, as described above, even if not part of "package" refrigeration and air conditioning equipment.

To summarise:

- An apprentice undertaking standard R&AC trade training will automatically receive the restricted electrical work training necessary for the scope of work described above, and if the apprentice holds evidence of a current apprenticeship, he/she will not require the permission of the ELB to undertake such electrical training. On completion of the apprenticeship, an application for the licence can be made, with supporting evidence. The licence issued will be endorsed "Refrigeration & Airconditioning – R&AC Electrical Work".
- An existing licence (which would be one of the old "R" licences, or endorsed with units of competence 1 to 6) issued to an R&AC tradesperson remains unchanged by this 2003 policy, unless the holder applies to the ELB and requests a "recognition of prior learning" assessment, and satisfies the ELB accordingly.

## **8.8 Instrument Process Control Technician's Licence (IPC Equipment Licence)**

This licence type requires evidence that the applicant has gained recognised trade qualifications.

If the applicants are not trade qualified, they do not qualify for this type of licence. They may make application for another type of licence.

An "Instrument Process Control Equipment Licence" allows the licence holder to perform the scope of work as stated below.

### **Scope of work for Instrument Process Control (IPC) Electrical Work**

1. Disconnect/reconnect IPC equipment
2. Flexible cords/cables and plugs work re: IPC
3. Fault find IPC control circuits
4. Modify, replace or repair IPC electrical components
5. Modify IPC control circuits in control panels

The licence does not authorise the holder to install or alter fixed wiring, except as stated above.

The work area category that is applicable to this licence type is Instrument Process Control Equipment Electrical Work.

Eligible applicants MUST provide trade qualifications as an "Instrument Fitter".

Training competencies/modules should be achieved during a formal IPC apprenticeship, if not an assessment based on the above scope of work is available through Swan College of TAFE.

### **Additional Information Regarding an Instrument Process Control Technicians Licence**

As a significant improvement to the previous system, this new category of restricted electrical licence is introduced, as an extension to the previous Instrumentation & Process Control equipment WAC.

This licence will allow the holder to:

1. Perform all the functions of a "disconnect/reconnect" licence;
2. Install, replace and repair flexible cords/cables and plugs connected to electrical equipment;
3. Perform general fault-finding in relation to control circuits associated with IPC equipment and to assess the type of corrective action required;
4. Modify, replace (not only on a like-for-like basis) or repair within IPC equipment, any electrical components; and
5. Modify control circuits for IPC equipment in control panels generally.

However, such licensees are not permitted to carry out the installation, initial connection and commissioning, replacement or modification of any field wiring (ie. fixed wiring) or other part of the electrical installation external to IPC equipment, such as the power supply cables to main drive motors, switchboard equipment or low voltage 240 volt field wiring to remote sensors/actuators. This is general electrical installation work requiring detailed knowledge of AS/NZS 3000 "Wiring Rules" and thus is outside the scope of Instrument & Process Control equipment related restricted electrical work as defined above. However, licence holders are permitted to modify control circuits within instrument and process control equipment control panels, as described above.

To summarise:

- An apprentice undertaking standard IPC trade training will automatically receive the restricted electrical work training necessary for the scope of work described above, and if the apprentice holds evidence of a current apprenticeship, he/she will not require the permission of the ELB to undertake such electrical training. On completion of the apprenticeship, an application for the licence can be made, with supporting evidence. The licence issued will be endorsed "IPC Electrical Work" (i.e. not endorsed with the previous Unit of Competence, or UoC, 1 to 6).
- A previous licence (which would be one of the old "R" licences, or endorsed with UoC 1 to 6) issued to an IPC tradesperson remains unchanged by this 2003 policy, unless the holder applies to the ELB and presents evidence of electrical training broadly equivalent to that currently undertaken by IPC apprentices, or requests a "recognition of prior learning" assessment, and satisfies the ELB accordingly.

## **9 TO OBTAIN AN APPLICATION FORM**

Application forms to commence training or to be recognised for prior learning, together with supporting fact sheets, can be obtained through the Licensing Office:

Energy Safety WA  
20 Southport Street  
West Leederville WA 6007

Telephone: (08) 9422 5282  
Facsimile (08) 9422 5222  
Email: [energylicensing@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:energylicensing@docep.wa.gov.au)  
Internet: [www.energysafety.wa.gov.au](http://www.energysafety.wa.gov.au) (look for the 'forms' icon on the home page)

**Licensing Office Hours - 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday**