

Requirements for the effective supervision of apprentice electricians

Decision paper and statement of reasons

April 2025

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1 Summary

The provision of effective supervision by employers and supervisors is essential for ensuring the safety of apprentice electrical workers carrying out electrical installation work. The work environment is inherently risky, and apprentices are still developing the knowledge and skills necessary for their role.

Energy Safe has made apprentice safety a [Compliance and Enforcement Priority for 2024-25](#), aligning with broader government efforts to strengthen oversight in apprenticeships and traineeships. The [Apprenticeships Taskforce Final Report](#), recently released by Apprenticeships Victoria, highlights serious issues—including fatalities, injuries, low completion rates, and workplace concerns such as bullying, harassment, and unsafe conditions. The government has endorsed its recommendations.

These findings align with Energy Safe's own experience in addressing apprentice safety concerns, reinforcing the need for a clear and enforceable supervision framework. Under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* (Vic) (**ESA**) and *Electricity Safety (General) Regulations 2019* (Vic) (**Regulations**), apprentice electrical workers are only deemed licensed to carry out electrical installation work under effective supervision. Following a series of safety incidents, including five apprentice fatalities between 2014 and early 2019, the Regulations were updated to place responsibility for supervision on employers and supervisors through the Apprentice Supervision Requirements (**Requirements**).

The currently published Requirements (**current Requirements**), however, mix enforceable obligations with general guidance, leading to confusion. To address this, we conducted a review and, in March 2024, published draft updated Requirements (**draft Requirements**) for consultation. We received five written submissions and 206 survey responses, with 90% of survey respondents being apprentice electrical workers. Feedback generally supported the proposed changes, though some submissions raised concerns about administrative and financial burdens, labour shortages, and potential impacts on the renewable energy transition. Key issues included:

- strengthen supervision ratios (e.g., from 1:2 to 1:1 for direct supervision)
- enhance and clarify employer and supervisor responsibilities
- address challenges with supervision levels (such as the process of undertaking competency assessments)
- introduce an apprentice rights and responsibilities section.

In response to the concerns raised, particularly regarding tighter supervisor to apprentice ratios, we gathered additional data and engaged directly with submitters to better understand their perspectives. After carefully reviewing all submissions and the available data, we have made changes to the draft Requirements to create an updated document (**new Requirements**) that clarifies the obligations and to address industry feedback while retaining the core provisions. Notably, we have:

- maintained the 1:1 ratio for direct supervision
- clarified that supervision ratios apply only to electrical installation work, excluding routine tasks like moving equipment or trench digging
- refined the definition of direct supervision, requiring visual contact only for high-risk tasks like isolation and fault-finding, while allowing supervisors to remain within audible range for lower-risk tasks
- retained the requirement that supervisors must be competent in the specific work being undertaken by the apprentice
- required employers to provide supervisors with either a physical or digital copy of the Requirements
- clarified that employers must ensure each apprentice has a valid training contract.

These updates strengthen safety for apprentice electricians by establishing clear, enforceable obligations while improving industry communication and compliance.

The new Requirements will come into effect on 1 September 2025, to provide time for industry to adapt their practices and implement the new arrangements. The new Requirements are available on our [Effective Supervision webpage](#), together with the consultation submissions and survey responses. The current Requirements continue to be in effect and apply until that date.

2 Background

This chapter outlines the energy safety legislative framework prescribing the Requirements and gives information about our consultation on the draft Requirements. It also situates these protections for apprentices within the wider context of employer obligations to ensure safe workplaces and provides information about the recent review by the Apprenticeships Taskforce.

2.1 Legislative framework

Legislation and regulations

Under section 39 of the ESA, an apprentice is deemed to be licensed as an electrical worker when working under supervision as prescribed in the Regulations, and a training contract under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic) (**ETRA**).

Under the Regulations, a person who employs an apprentice must ensure that any electrical installation work carried out by the apprentice is done only while working under ‘effective supervision’ of a licensed electrician and in accordance with the Requirements.

Regulation 105 defines ‘effective supervision’, in relation to electrical work, as:

- a) being present at the site of the electrical work to the extent necessary to ensure that the work is being correctly performed and carried out in accordance with the ESA and these Regulations; and
- b) being aware of the details of the work being performed and giving detailed instructions and directions with respect to the work.

Regulation 507 outlines the requirements for supervision of apprentices carrying out electrical installation work, which are:

- 1) A person who employs an apprentice must ensure that any electrical installation work carried out by the apprentice is carried out under effective supervision in accordance with the Requirements.
- 2) A licensed electrician or licensed electrical switchgear worker who is supervising an apprentice carrying out electrical installation work must supervise that apprentice in accordance with the Requirements.
- 3) In this regulation, the Requirements means the *Requirements for the effective supervision of apprentice electricians*, as published or amended from time to time by Energy Safe Victoria.

2.2 Consultation on the draft Requirements

We are reviewing the Requirements as part of our broader focus on safety for apprentice electricians, which is one of our [2024-25 Compliance and Enforcement Priorities](#).

We published the draft Requirements in March 2024, seeking stakeholder feedback on our proposals to strengthen the responsibilities and requirements for employers and supervisors and specifically:

- whether the responsibilities and requirements outlined in the draft Requirements provide an appropriate framework to ensure the safety of apprentice electrical workers, and
- the overall clarity, readability and understandability of the draft Requirements.

Our consultation paper accompanying the draft Requirements highlighted our proposed changes from the current Requirements and asked specific questions about key issues relating to each section of the draft Requirements.

We received one confidential submission and four public submissions, from:

- Electrical Trades Union (**ETU**)
- Master Electricians Australia (**MEA**)
- National Electricians and Communications Association (**NECA**)
- Dynamic Electricians (**DE**).

We also conducted an online survey targeted at apprentice electricians, supervisors and employers. We received 206 survey responses, of which 90 per cent were from apprentice electricians.

In seeking to better understand the different perspectives of submitters and suggestions for alternative approaches, we also met with the ETU, MEA and NECA during August 2024.

The issues raised in submissions and our response are discussed in chapter 3 of this document. Public submissions and a consolidated view of the survey responses are available on our [Consultations](#) webpage.

2.3 Broader framework for apprentices

The Requirements are in addition to protections for apprentices that ordinarily apply under the ETRA and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic) (**OHSA**), reflecting the greater need for protections given the hazardous nature of electrical installation work for inexperienced workers. There are also a number of services available to support apprentices, as discussed below.

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

In Victoria, the regulatory framework for apprenticeships and traineeships is governed primarily by the ETRA and its associated regulations and guidelines. Part 4.2 of the ETRA establishes the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (**VRQA**) as the primary body responsible for overseeing apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria. This part outlines the VRQA's core responsibilities, including:

- **Regulatory Oversight:** Ensuring compliance with prescribed standards for training providers and apprenticeship programs to maintain quality and consistency.
- **Monitoring and Enforcement:** Supervising training providers and employers to verify adherence to their obligations under training contracts and schemes.
- **Approval Processes:** Reviewing and approving organisations and employers who wish to engage apprentices or trainees.

Part 5.5 of the ETRA sets out the operational framework, detailing the instruments and obligations that govern apprenticeships. It establishes training schemes, which outline qualifications and competencies, and governs employer approvals to ensure workplaces meet training standards. It also sets requirements for training contracts, which formalise agreements between employers and apprentices or trainees, and training plans, which detail structured learning pathways with a registered training organisation. Additionally, this part outlines the obligations of both employers and apprentices, ensuring training commitments and workplace standards are upheld, and grants the VRQA authority to resolve disputes.

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

In Victoria, employers have a duty to protect employees, including apprentices, from harm under the OHSA. For example, under the OHSA, employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that their workplace is safe and without risks to employees' health. To meet this duty, employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- Provide and maintain safe equipment and systems of work.
- Ensure safety in the use, handling, storage, and transport of machinery, tools, and substances.
- Keep the workplace they manage in a condition that is safe and without risks to health.
- Provide adequate facilities for employees' welfare at the workplace.

- Give employees the necessary information, instructions, training, and supervision to work safely and without risks to health.
- These responsibilities extend to independent contractors and their employees for matters within the employer's control, even if an agreement attempts to limit or remove that control.

In addition, the OHS Regulations also place responsibilities on employers (and self-employed persons) to, prior to undertaking high-risk construction work, complete a [Safe Work Method Statements \(SWMS\)](#). SWMS are documents that describe the high-risk construction work (HRCW) to be carried out at a workplace, the hazards arising from that work, and the measures implemented to control the risks. Work on or near energised electrical installations is a type of HRCW, and so a SWMS must be completed before commencement.

Apprenticeships Victoria

Apprenticeships Victoria, a division within the Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, plays a central role in shaping and supporting the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Victoria. Apprenticeships Victoria provides policy advice to the Victorian Government and collaborates with stakeholders to ensure effective coordination of the system. It also oversees various government-funded programs designed to strengthen and expand apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities.

These programs include the Big Build Apprenticeships initiative, where Apprenticeships Victoria partners with employers on major infrastructure projects to increase participation. Apprenticeships Victoria also supports apprentices through its Apprenticeship Support Officers, who offer guidance and referral services to those in need, and its Apprentice Employee Assistance Program which offers support services to apprentices working in small businesses.

Additionally, the Victorian Group Training Program provides funding to Group Training Organisations to encourage the employment of apprentices and trainees, particularly from underrepresented groups. Lastly, the Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees Program helps individuals who have lost their employment connect with new opportunities.

2.4 Apprenticeships Taskforce

On 16 October 2024, the Victorian Government released its [response to a report by the Apprenticeships Taskforce](#), which was established to find ways to improve safety, fairness and training quality for apprentices and trainees.

The Apprenticeships Taskforce's Final Report (**Apprenticeships Report**) highlights the need for enhanced oversight and stronger safeguards for apprenticeships and traineeships, identifying several critical issues:

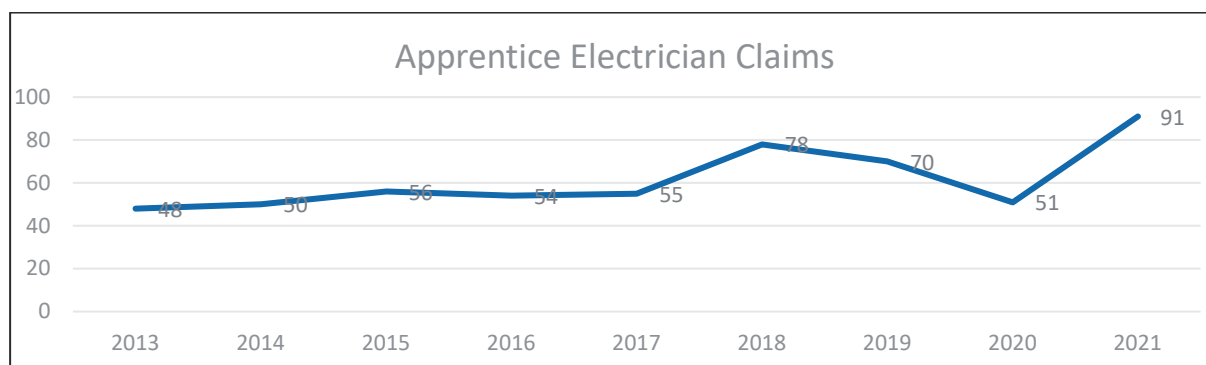
- Recent tragic incidents, including fatalities and serious injuries, expose significant gaps in the current regulatory framework.
- Victoria's apprenticeship completion rate (52.3%) is below the national average (55.9%) and significantly lags behind Western Australia's rate (65.7%). Traineeship completion rates are also consistently below the national average. National data links low completion rates to dissatisfaction with workplace safety, conditions, supervision, and skill development.
- Reports of bullying, harassment, unsafe conditions, and unpaid wages are widespread, with women and culturally diverse apprentices particularly affected. These issues have long-term impacts on apprentices and contribute to low completion rates.

Relevantly, the Apprenticeships Report noted that the number of significant WorkSafe claims for apprentices increased by 31 per cent between 2013 and 2021.¹

¹ Apprenticeships Taskforce (2024) [Final Report](#), Victorian Government, pp 11-12

WorkSafe provided the following data to Energy Safe on the number of claims submitted by apprentice electricians over the same period.

Figure 1: Number of WorkSafe Victoria claims by apprentice electricians, 2013-21



Two of the recommendations in the Apprenticeships Report are particularly relevant to the Requirements under energy safety laws:

1. Recommendation 8D – introduction of common outcome-based employer standards in the ETRA that provide for workplace safety, supervision, quality of training and apprentice mentoring and support. They are intended to apply to all types of employers and the proposed new Vocational Education and Training, apprenticeship and traineeship regulator will monitor and enforce compliance with the standards.
2. Recommendation 6 – government to provide information sheets at the commencement of an apprenticeship to clarify roles, rights, responsibilities, and expectations as well as provide contemporary information across the life of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The proposed introduction of a central help desk (Recommendation 4) may also impact the reporting of complaints about effective supervision or electrical safety matters to Energy Safe.

We are engaging with government to ensure the effective supervision framework aligns with the implementation of the Taskforce's recommendations, and that we take opportunities to communicate the Requirements via new information channels.

3 Consultation feedback and response

This chapter summarises the key issues raised in submissions made in response to our consultation on the draft Requirements, our consideration of the feedback and further analysis where necessary, and our final position.

3.1 Supervisor to apprentice ratios

Supervisor to apprentice ratios specify the maximum number of apprentices that a supervisor may supervise concurrently for a given level of supervision (i.e., for direct, general and broad supervision). This supplements the requirement, discussed later, for supervisors to assess and determine the level of supervision required in circumstances where the level is not specified in the Requirements.

Preliminary position

Table 1 below shows the current supervision ratios, as well as those we proposed in the draft Requirements. We proposed to tighten the ratios for direct and general supervision and to introduce ratios for broad supervision and combinations of supervision levels. The proposed ratios reflect our view that the least experienced apprentices ought to be provided with the greatest level of oversight, while more experienced apprentices can be given greater autonomy for lower risk electrical work.

Table 1: Current and proposed supervision ratios

Supervision level	Current	Proposed
Direct	1:2	1:1
General	1:4	1:3
Broad	None specified	1:5
Combination – direct / general	None specified	1 direct + 1 general
Combination – direct / broad	None specified	1 direct + 3 broad
Combination – general / broad	None specified	1 general + 3 broad

Summary of submissions

There were a range of views expressed in submissions. Some expressed full, unequivocal, support for all the proposed ratios, some expressed concerns just with the proposed direct supervision ratio while supporting the other ratios, and some opposed any change to the ratios.

MEA

MEA questioned the need for changes based on the deaths of five apprentice electricians over the past seven years, noting that some incidents happened nearly a decade ago and details of two cases are still under investigation. They also pointed out that one of the apprentices was likely under broad supervision, so the proposed changes would not have prevented the incident.

MEA submitted that there would be two types of detrimental impacts from the proposed supervision ratios which would especially harm small to medium enterprise (**SME**) contractors:

- Economic impacts – Stricter ratios would increase costs and limit business size, as hiring more apprentices would require hiring additional electricians for supervision. Enforcing a 1:1 ratio is inefficient and unnecessary based on readily accessible information.
- Skills shortage – Reducing the direct supervision ratio from 1:2 to 1:1 would halve the capacity for apprenticeships, which could worsen the current skills shortage in the electrical industry, especially considering the majority of electrical contractors are SMEs. Other initiatives to improve the skills shortage will be hindered by these changes.

In light of these impacts, MEA advocated for a thorough cost benefit analysis to ensure the Requirements enhance safety while supporting industry growth and job skills development.

MEA suggested removing the ratios or at least maintaining the current ratios. Although less preferred, MEA otherwise suggested adopting a 1:1 ratio for direct supervision but allowing a 1:2 ratio where supported by risk assessments. MEA noted there could be a requirement for supervisors to complete a supervision course that guides them on risk assessments before they are allowed to do this.

NECA

NECA submitted that the ratios are acceptable in principle but suggested that they are unachievable in practice. NECA suggested that variations to the ratios should be allowed based on a risk assessment as is the case in Tasmania.

NECA also highlighted specific concerns raised by its members, particularly that the proposed supervision ratio could reduce the hiring of apprentices. A member also noted that some employ first-year apprentices under an internal training program where they work on large civil works projects, laying conduit and hauling cable and getting a broader understanding of basic safety and product knowledge that is beneficial for their learning. The member suggested these opportunities would also be reduced as a result of the proposed supervision ratios.

ETU

The ETU supported the review and strengthening of the Requirements. The ETU supported the proposed ratios, highlighting the “need to ensure adequate supervision of the next generation of licensed electrical workers is paramount to the future safety, security and stability of our energy system, and as such, we support any attempt to strengthen this essential education and employment pathway.” The ETU suggested clarifying in the materials that the ratios only apply when an apprentice is doing electrical installation work.

Survey results

In the survey, 85 per cent of respondents supported the proposed ratios. When asked if the ratios were well understood by industry, only 72 per cent said yes. Some of the free text responses highlighted unsafe practices, lack of understanding and/or compliance with the ratios and noted the importance of having ratios. For example:

- ‘I’ve seen apprentices working live (without supervision).’
- ‘In some cases I have seen 1 electrician to 8-10 apprentices.’
- ‘Most companies these days would go bankrupt if they ran jobs on these ratios. Real world it’s 2 A grades maybe to 20 apprentices on most jobs.’
- ‘Often it is what is easiest for the employer not what is required by ESV that dictates the ratios.’
- ‘My companies business model is all about using apprentices for cheap labour.’
- ‘Too many apprentices can lead to no one getting correct training.’
- ‘Apprentice numbers need to be black and white for supervisors. There are business who employ only apprentices due to costing.’

- 'Because too many students or apprentices and the special important tutoring may be missed out.'
- 'These ratios make practical sense to ensure smooth work flow and safe work practice.'

Final position

We continue to consider supervisor to apprentice ratios are necessary to provide a clear framework for ensuring the effective supervision of apprentice electricians. We note most submissions supported the general, broad, and combination supervision ratios, and so we have adopted these in the new Requirements.

For the most contentious 1:1 ratio for direct supervision, we sought and analysed additional data to inform our decision. While we acknowledge it is not supported by all stakeholders, we have decided to proceed to adopt the 1:1 ratio in the new Requirements. We step out below the factors that we consider support our decision, being:

- The basis for change remains strong.
- Direct supervision for more than one apprentice at a time is impractical.
- Risk assessments to relax ratio requirements may not be uniformly and robustly implemented.
- Limited impact of supervision ratios on labour shortages.
- Most electrical employers will not be affected by the 1:1 direct supervision ratio.
- Closer supervision improves job satisfaction, which likely improves completion rates
- Our proposals generally align with other jurisdictions.

Given these considerations, we believe the 1:1 direct supervision ratio is less restrictive than stakeholders had initially perceived. It targets high-risk situations, ensuring the safety of inexperienced apprentices and those performing high-risk tasks, and applies only when the apprentice is undertaking electrical installation work (see below and in section 3.5 for details). As apprentices gain experience and develop safe work practices, the level of required supervision appropriately decreases.

As outlined in section 3.5, stakeholder discussions highlighted a common misconception that supervision requirements apply to all tasks performed by electrical apprentices. However, these requirements, including supervision ratios, only apply to electrical installation work, not routine tasks like moving equipment or digging trenches away from live electrical equipment. Accordingly, supervisors can demonstrate electrical installation work to multiple apprentices or let them observe a peer under supervision, offering valuable learning opportunities without breaching the Requirements.

The sections below provide further detail on specific concerns raised in submissions.

The basis for change remains strong

We believe there is a compelling case for strengthening and clarifying the Requirements. The time that has passed since the fatalities does not suggest that safety issues for apprentice electricians have been resolved or significantly improved.

Survey responses from apprentices revealed that unsafe supervision practices persist in the industry, highlighting ongoing concerns about ineffective supervision. This is consistent with the findings presented in the Apprenticeship Taskforce report, and the data on WorkSafe claims by apprentice electricians, both detailed in section 2.4 of this document.

To address these issues, we aim to:

- strengthen the supervision requirements to improve safety practices for apprentices, and
- clearly define legal obligations within the Requirements, avoiding any blending with guidance materials.

MEA has requested a cost-benefit analysis, arguing that the proposed changes to supervision ratios may "impose significant costs without proportional safety benefits." Although not a formal quantitative cost benefit analysis, the framework we applied here is in effect a qualitative cost-benefit analysis,

given we have identified and compared the benefits of strengthened Requirements (i.e. avoided injuries and fatalities, improved skill development) with the costs (i.e. reduced number of apprentices, the burden for employers and supervisors in providing closer supervision). The apprentice survey and the findings presented in the Apprenticeship Taskforce report underline the strong case for action here to improve safety outcomes. Further, our analysis suggests that the marginal costs of the new requirements are likely to be lower than some submissions suggest, given that most employers will not be affected by the 1:1 direct supervision ratio, and there is capacity within the workforce to support it.

While some disruption is expected for parts of the industry, these impacts are likely to be outweighed by the safety benefits of clearer, strengthened supervision requirements.

Direct supervision for more than one apprentice at a time is impractical

The Requirements state that supervisors providing direct supervision must meet specific conditions, such as maintaining constant communication, staying within visual and/or audible range, and observing all aspects of the apprentice's work to ensure safety and accuracy. These standards require supervisors to be fully attentive to the apprentice's activities when the apprentice is doing electrical installation work.

We do not believe that a supervisor can effectively provide this level of direct supervision to more than one apprentice at a time during electrical work. The attention required for direct supervision would be compromised if divided between multiple apprentices, risking safety and performance standards.

However, the use of combination ratios (direct + general or direct + broad supervision) offers some flexibility. These ratios enable supervisors to provide general or broad supervision to more experienced apprentices while offering direct supervision to another, accommodating different skill levels without compromising safety.

Risk assessments are already factored into supervision ratios

Some submissions suggested that relaxed supervision ratios, such as a 1:2 direct supervision ratio, should be permitted where supported by a risk assessment conducted by the supervisor to determine the appropriate supervision ratio for specific tasks. This would mean that if an apprentice is deemed sufficiently competent and the risk of the task is sufficiently low, they may operate under a 1:2 supervision ratio rather than 1:1.

The highest risk cases are associated with inexperienced apprentices (i.e. first year apprentices) and particularly high-risk work (i.e. isolation procedures, fault finding). This is where we consider apprentices need the 1:1 supervision ratio to maintain safety and training. Since risk assessments would apply to these groups of apprentices, errors or inconsistent assessments could compromise safety and training, and potentially expose apprentices to harm.

The supervision ratios in the Requirements are built around the concept that as apprentices get more experience, the risks associated with apprentices undertaking electrical installation work reduce and they can work with increased autonomy. We consider that the current framework already adequately considers risk when determining supervision ratios and therefore, we do not believe that further risk assessments should lead to relaxed ratios.

As discussed below in section 3.3, we do not have the same concerns about competency assessments to determine appropriate supervision levels as we do for risk assessments to determine the direct supervision ratio.

Limited impact of supervision ratios on labour shortages

Noting submissions raised concerns about exacerbating skills shortages, we analysed data about the current number and type of employers and supervisors of apprentices as well as the current and forecast number of apprentices to understand potential impacts. We also looked at the current

completion rates of apprenticeships and any known reasons underpinning lower than anticipated rates of conversion to fully licensed electrical workers. We used data from our ESVConnect database and obtained data from the VRQA and the Victorian Skills Authority for this purpose.

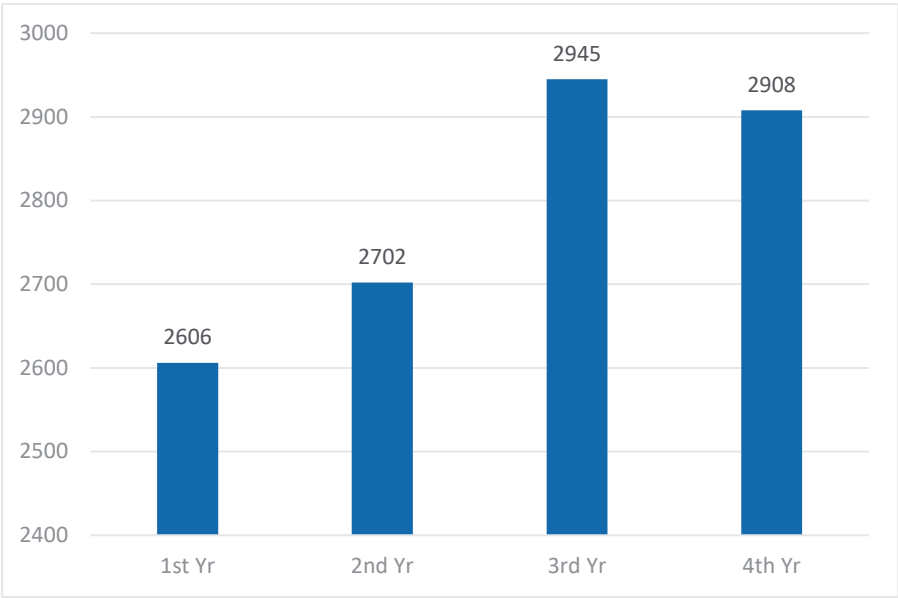
The current number of licensed electricians as recorded in the ESV Connect database is **44,250**, however, not all licensed electricians are active all the time. Notably, according to the Victorian Skills Authority, the number of electricians in 2023 was **37,778**, projected to grow to **38,489** by 2026.² The current number of apprentice electricians is **11,161**, with the breakdown by year shown in Figure 2 below. The historical number of apprentice electrician completions is shown in Figure 3.

This data shows that there are sufficient supervisors to support a 1:1 direct supervision ratio for first-year apprentices. Even with a conservative estimate that first- and second-year apprentices all require direct supervision, third-year apprentices require general supervision and fourth-year apprentices require broad supervision, the approximate number of supervisors required to support the forecast numbers under the proposed ratios is **6,782**.

While there has been an increase in apprentice electricians recently due to state and federal government incentives, at most 3,000 new apprentices are entering the workforce each year. We acknowledge that not every licensed electrician can act as a supervisor and that the circumstances in each business are different. However, we believe there is sufficient capacity across the industry to support providing 1:1 direct supervision to first-year apprentices.

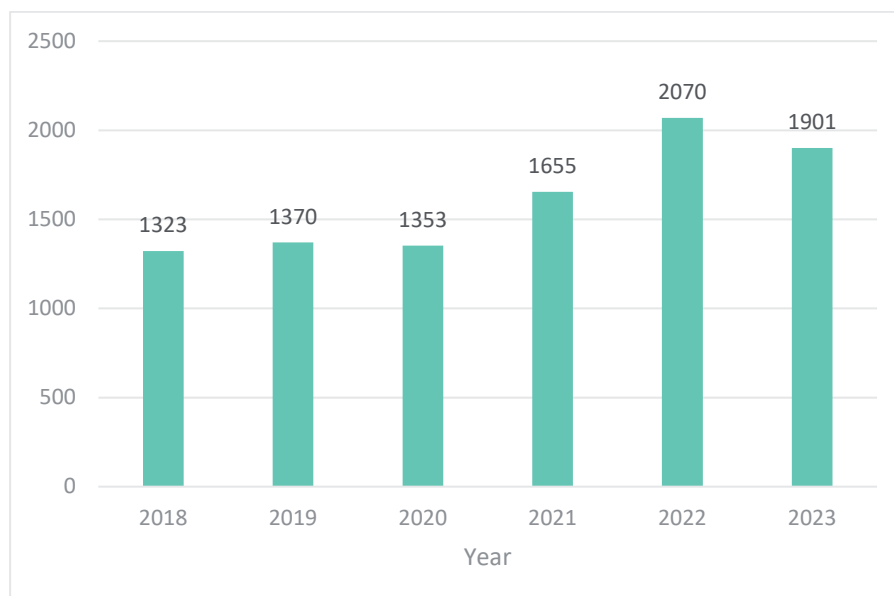
Some publications have highlighted the labour shortage of electricians as a barrier to achieving Australia’s emission targets and transition to renewable energy.³ Based on the current number of available supervisors and apprentice electricians, we believe the introduction of a 1:1 direct supervision ratio for first-year apprentices is unlikely to be a limiting factor. There are sufficient licensed electricians across the industry to support an increase in apprentice numbers into the future.

Figure 2: Current apprentice electricians by year level



² Victorian Skills Authority, [Employment Forecast Dashboard](#), accessed 26 August 2024. Note that this number is lower than the number of licensed electricians because some electricians keep their registration current but do not work primarily as electricians.

³ For example, Powering Skills Organisation in its [Workforce Planning Report July 2024](#) states that Australia needs a 40 per cent higher intake of apprentice electricians in 2024-2030 compared to the yearly average from 2016-2022 to meet forecast demand. See p.31

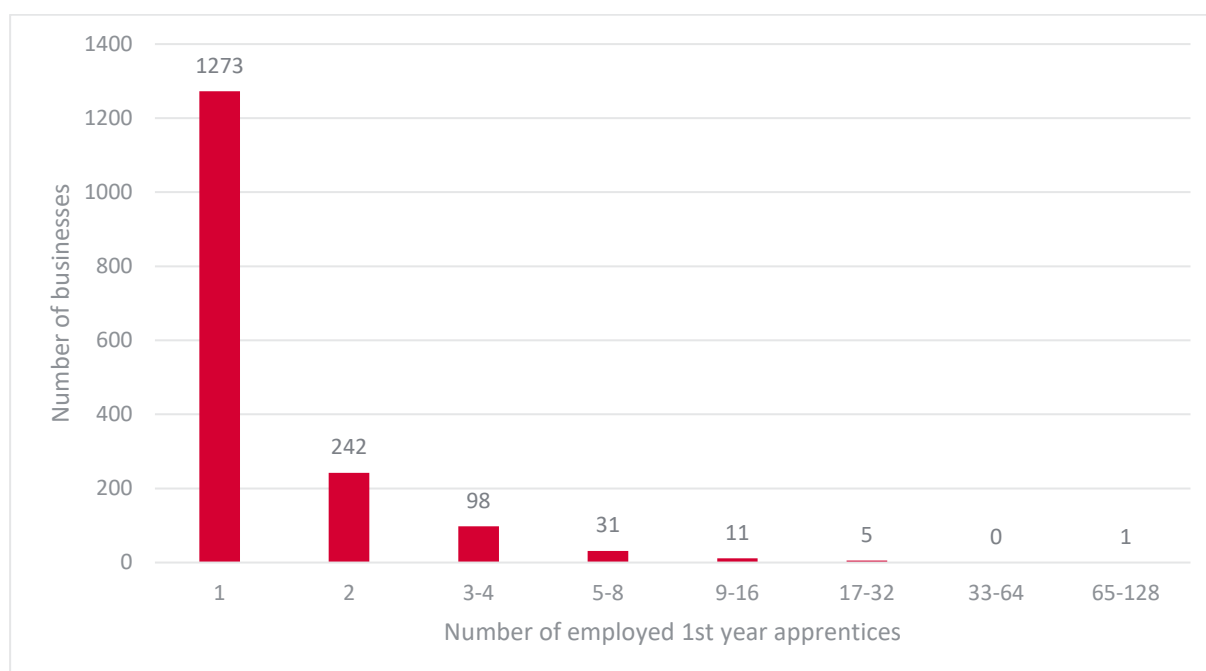
Figure 3: Historical apprentice electrician completions

Most electrical employers will not be affected by the 1:1 direct supervision ratio

To assess how broad the impact of the 1:1 direct supervision ratio would be, we obtained data on the number of apprentice electricians employed by individual businesses. Figure 4 below shows the number of businesses that hire first-year apprentices.

This data shows that most electrical employers will not be impacted by the introduction of a 1:1 direct supervision ratio. Currently, there are 1,661 employers who employ first-year apprentices, of whom 1,273 employ only one first-year apprentice. This means 77 per cent of employers of apprentices employ only one first-year apprentice.

Businesses which only employ one first-year apprentice, or one apprentice at any level, will not be impacted by the changed supervision ratio. As such, this data suggests that a significant number of businesses will be unaffected by the new supervisor to apprentice ratios.

Figure 4: Number of businesses that employ first-year apprentices

Closer supervision improves job satisfaction which likely improves completion rates

On a related issue, we consider that closer supervision requirements can improve workplace safety, speed up skill development, and boost job satisfaction, leading to higher apprenticeship completion rates. If this happens, it will at least partially offset any negative impacts associated with the changed supervision requirements.

This is an important aspect, given that over the last six years the completion rate for apprentice electricians has been 70 to 74 per cent. This means more than one in four apprentice electricians, between 700 to 800 individuals per year, do not complete their apprenticeship. Figure 5 below shows these completion rates for apprentice electricians in Victoria from 2018 to 2023.

Figure 5: Apprentice electrician completion rates, 2018 to 2023

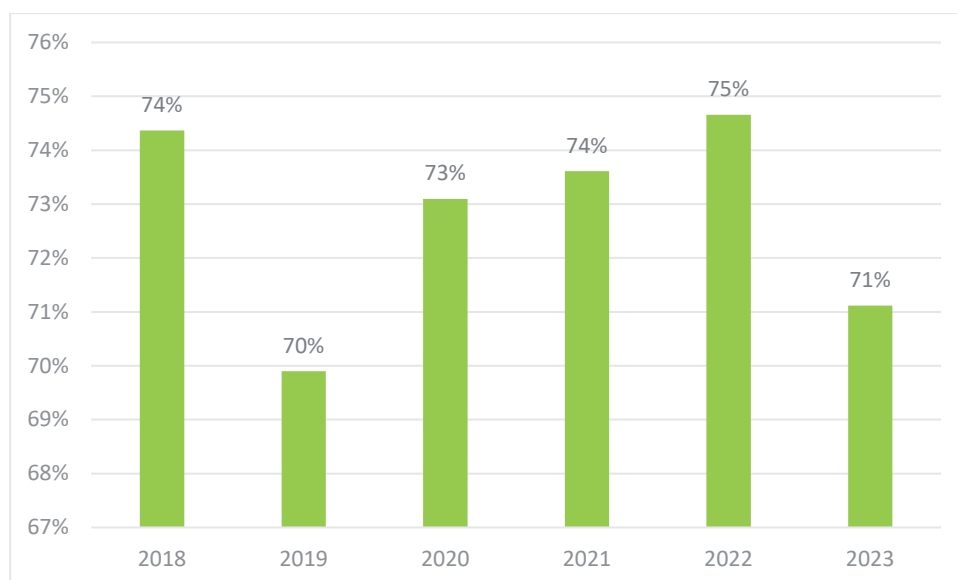
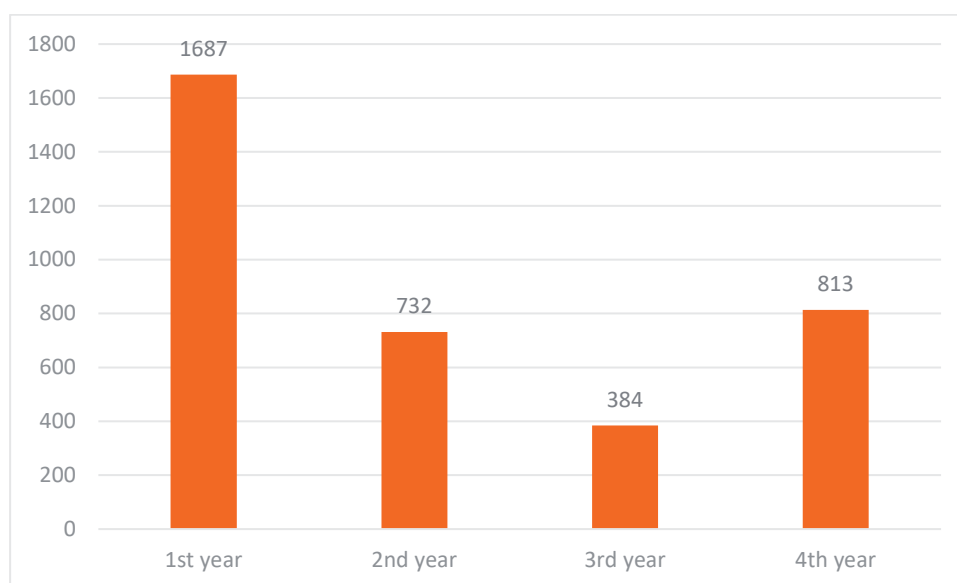


Figure 6 below shows that over the same period 2018 to 2023, 46 per cent of apprentice electricians who did not complete their apprenticeship left during their first year. This is more than twice as many as the next highest year.

Figure 6: Inactive apprentice electricians by year level, 2018 to 2023



Non-completion of apprenticeships is therefore a significant contributing factor to worker shortages. While the 1:1 direct supervision ratio may cause a reduction in the number of available

apprenticeships, non-completion is likely to be a more significant factor in any labour shortages. The Apprenticeships Report notes that, ‘National data shows some correlation between completion and satisfaction with on-the-job aspects of apprenticeships and traineeships, including safety, working conditions, supervision, and skills learned on-the-job.’⁴

Therefore, providing closer supervision during the early stages of an apprenticeship provides an opportunity to improve apprenticeship completion rates and support industry workforce needs into the future.

Our proposals generally align with other jurisdictions

As noted in our consultation paper, there are a range of approaches to supervision ratios taken by other jurisdictions, as summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Apprentice supervision ratios in other jurisdictions

State	Direct	General	Broad
New South Wales	1:1	1:3	1:5
Western Australia	1:2 (of whom only 1 may be under direct supervision)	1:4 (at any level of supervision)	
Tasmania	1:1 (may be adjusted to 1:2 following risk assessment)	Ratio determined following risk assessment	
Queensland	None specified		

The supervision ratios align with New South Wales and are comparable to Western Australia and Tasmania, while Queensland does not prescribe any ratios.

3.2 Employer and supervisor responsibilities

Ensuring the safety and development of electrical apprentices is a shared responsibility between employers and supervisors. Employers must establish and maintain appropriate training and supervision systems, continuously assess their effectiveness, and appoint supervisors to oversee apprentices. Supervisors, in turn, are responsible for providing effective supervision, ensuring apprentices are safeguarded from electrical hazards while they learn and practice on-the-job skills. These obligations align with broader workplace safety laws, reinforcing the duty of care owed to apprentices and the critical role of structured supervision in minimising risks and upholding industry standards.

Preliminary position

In the draft Requirements we proposed changes to:

- clarify the distinct roles of employers and supervisors.
- place an explicit onus on employers to appoint supervisors and ensure they comply with the Requirements.
- remove the requirement for supervisors to be ‘qualified’, given no qualifications are specified.
- refine and simplify the requirements for supervisors.

Our proposed changes are intended to provide clarity on the distinct roles of employers and supervisors. While some electricians fulfil both roles, some organisations have separate persons in these roles. Therefore, we considered it important to clarify that employers have specific

⁴ Apprenticeships Taskforce (2024) [Final Report](#), Victorian Government, p.11

responsibilities to appoint supervisors, ensure the quality of apprentice training and comply with the OHSA, while supervisors are responsible for day-to-day effective oversight of apprentice electricians.

Summary of submissions

NECA

NECA sought more detail on the implementation of these changes, stating that it had “concerns about the implementation and application of this requirement.” However, NECA did not outline their specific concerns in relation to the employer and supervisor responsibilities.

It also expressed concern that the requirement for a supervisor to be competent in the relevant work area could reduce the pool of available supervisors, including in the case where an electrician refuses to become a supervisor.

ETU

The ETU suggested that subsection 4.2 of the draft Requirements be amended to require that employers provide supervisors with a physical copy of the document, in addition to making them aware of the responsibilities and requirements outlined in the document.

It also recommended adding a requirement in subsection 5.2 for supervisors to undertake a continuing professional development (**CPD**) course for supervision, available to licensed electrical workers with at least 5 years’ experience. It recommended Energy Safe develop a course for this purpose.

MEA

MEA noted that its members often serve as both employer and supervisor. As a result, they are not affected by the proposal to extend the employer's responsibilities regarding apprentice supervision, specifically the requirement to continuously monitor and assess the effectiveness of these arrangements to ensure the desired outcomes.

Confidential submission

The confidential submission recommended that supervisors be made aware of their apprentice’s contract end date so that they do not continue to work after it expires. If they do work beyond the expiry date of their contract, the apprentice would no longer be deemed to be licensed under section 39 of the ESA.

Survey results

In the survey, 98 per cent of responses agreed with the proposed employer responsibilities and 92 per cent agreed with the proposed supervisor responsibilities.

Final position

We consider that, when taken as a whole, the Requirements provides sufficiently thorough detail on the roles of employers and supervisors. For situations where the employer and supervisor are different people, we have set out each party’s distinct responsibilities.

Supervisor qualifications

The current Requirements require a supervisor to be competent. We proposed a clarification in the draft Requirements that the supervisor’s competence applies to the work being carried out by the supervised apprentice. Our intent is to ensure the supervisor can advise the apprentice how to conduct the work safely, provide effective oversight of their work and ensure compliance with relevant rules and standards. For example, an electrician who has never installed solar panels should not

supervise an apprentice to install solar panels. However, we understand that supervisors typically work within similar fields and are unlikely to supervise an apprentice in a completely new field. A supervisor could demonstrate compliance with this requirement by referring to previous experience in that particular field. Therefore, we do not consider that this change will cause a significant reduction to the available pool of supervisors.

If an electrician refuses to act as a supervisor, we view that as a workplace relations issue for the employer and supervisor to resolve internally. Our intention is to ensure that the employer has clearly appointed a supervisor, and that the supervisor has clearly agreed to undertake the supervision role.

Regarding a CPD course for supervisors, we are seeking to address this request outside the current CPD program by exploring options for developing a voluntary course for supervisors during FY 2024-25. Supervisor training cannot be included in the existing CPD program because it would exceed the required 8 hours of training material.

Other submission proposals

We have adopted a modified version of the ETU's suggested amendment, by requiring employers to provide a physical or digital copy of the Requirements to supervisors, which is included at section 4.2 of the new Requirements. In its rationale for Recommendation 6 about information sheets, the Apprenticeships Report noted that:

Providing employers with guidance materials on the importance of supporting apprentices and trainees to safely complete their training will also help to encourage compliance with obligations, including providing an appropriate workplace and supervision.⁵

It also highlighted that better provision of information to employers, supervisors and apprentices regarding roles, responsibilities and rights will improve the experience of apprentices and reduce the chance of issues arising during the apprenticeship.⁶

We consider that providing a copy of the Requirements will support this information provision. However, we encourage employers and supervisors to focus on discussing the supervisors' responsibilities rather than delivery of the document. As noted in section 3.6 below, we will work with Apprenticeships Victoria to include relevant details about the new Requirements in the information sheet for apprentice electricians.

We agree that employers have a responsibility to ensure that apprentice electricians do not continue to work after the expiry of a training contract. Therefore, we have made the following additions to the Requirements to clarify an employer's obligations regarding training contracts:

- Section 2.2 – added that an apprentice must have a valid training contract to be deemed to be licensed.
- Section 4.3 – added that an employer must ensure each apprentice they employ has a valid training contract.

Under section 39 of the ESA, apprentices must have a valid training contract under the ETRA, otherwise they are not deemed to be licensed. Further, under section 36 of the ESA, employers must ensure that any employee performing electrical installation work is a licensed electrical worker. Given this, it is ultimately the responsibility of the employer (not the supervisor) to ensure that their employees are either licensed or have a valid training contract. If the contract has expired, apprentices are not deemed to be licensed, and both the employer and apprentice may face penalties under the ESA. We intend to reinforce this message in the electricians' CPD program and any future supervision course.

⁵ Apprenticeships Taskforce (2024) [Final Report](#), Victorian Government, p.33

⁶ Apprenticeships Taskforce (2024) [Final Report](#), Victorian Government, p.33

3.3 Levels of supervision

Levels of supervision are used widely across different jurisdictions and industries to describe the nature of supervision required at different stages of an apprenticeship. The levels are typically categorised as direct, general and broad, with each allowing scope for supervisors to provide apprentices with greater autonomy as they progress through their apprenticeship.

Preliminary position

In the draft Requirements we proposed to retain the levels of supervision but to modify some of the wording. For example, we proposed to:

- change 'shall' to 'must' to clarify legal obligations;
- require a supervisor who is giving direct supervision to remain with visual contact AND audible range of the apprentice at all times; and
- allow scope for a supervisor who is giving broad supervision to leave the worksite subject to remaining readily contactable by the apprentice at all times.

We also proposed to introduce an explicit requirement for supervisors to conduct a competency assessment in consultation with the apprentice to determine the appropriate level of supervision where the level is not specified in the Requirements.

Summary of submissions

MEA

MEA supported the principle of a competency assessment but requested that we develop a clear template to ensure consistency of application across the industry. It also expressed concern with the language of 'consultation' with apprentices in performing the competency assessment, in that it suggests the apprentice participates in determining the level of supervision.

ETU

The ETU raised a concern that the definition of 'broad supervision' may enable supervisors to drop apprentices off at a work site in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon, without providing effective supervision throughout the day.

NECA

NECA expressed concern that these levels of supervision would result in increased logistical challenges and administrative burden for its members. It was concerned that in order for supervisors to demonstrate compliance with these changes, they must undertake significant additional record-keeping and documentation activities. In support of this argument, it listed challenges such as continual re-assignment of apprentices to different supervisors, maintaining detailed records of supervision, documenting competency assessments and diversion of resources from operational activities.

Survey results

In the survey, 90 per cent of respondents agreed that the proposed supervision levels make practical sense in a work setting.

Final position

Competency assessments

Competency assessments play a vital role in the Requirements as they ensure apprentices receive the appropriate level of supervision. To strengthen this process, we have expanded and clarified the factors supervisors must consider when assessing an apprentice's competency (see section 7.4 of the new Requirements).

We acknowledge MEA's suggestion to develop a template to assist supervisors with competency assessments. However, our primary aim in reviewing the Requirements is to clearly define legal obligations without combining them with guidance or advice. That said, we are open to creating additional guidance in a separate document if the industry identifies a need after the new Requirements are published. We also welcome feedback from stakeholders on whether further guidance would be beneficial.

In section 3.1 above, we raised concerns regarding supervisors conducting risk assessments to allow variations from the specified supervision ratios. We appreciate this may appear to conflict with our views on supervisors conducting competency assessments. However, we do not have the same level of concerns about the rigour of these competency assessments, primarily because the Requirements specify the level of supervision that must be applied for the highest-risk work and so the focus of competency assessments is on lower-risk work. For example, Table 2 included in section 11 of the new Requirements steps out the levels of supervision for specified types of electrical installation work. The table makes it clear that:

- First-year apprentices require direct supervision.
- More experienced apprentices also require direct supervision when performing high-risk tasks.
- As apprentices gain experience – both in terms of time in their apprenticeship and proficiency in specific tasks – they progress to general and then broad supervision.

The competency assessments, which determine when an apprentice advances through these supervision levels, assume a baseline level of work experience. These assessments typically begin after the apprentice's first year of training, for instance, when transitioning to general supervision.

In contrast, the proposed risk assessments allowing relaxed direct supervision ratios could take place at any stage. This raises a significant risk that inexperienced apprentices or those performing high-risk tasks might not receive the close supervision necessary to ensure their safety.

We accept that the phrase 'in consultation with' may be unclear as to the role of the apprentice in the competency assessment. We have changed the phrase to 'in discussion with' to clarify that the supervisor is discussing the assessment with the apprentice and explaining the reason for choosing the relevant supervision level.

Definition of broad supervision

The definition of broad supervision in the draft Requirements allows a supervisor to leave a work site, but it still requires them to provide 'periodic, face-to-face contact throughout the day/shift, checking that the apprentice's work complies with technical and safety requirements'.

We note the concerns raised by the ETU. We agree that the intent of the definition of broad supervision is not to allow a supervisor to simply be at the work site at the start and end of the day/shift. Our intention is to allow a supervisor to leave a work site on occasion to, for example, collect additional supplies needed for the job. However, we believe a supervisor should remain available to the apprentice throughout the day, providing periodic, face-to-face supervision. We believe the current wording in the draft Requirements accurately reflects this balance.

Increased administrative burden

NECA suggested that the proposed changes would increase logistical challenges and administrative burdens, noting its concern that, for example, detailed records would need to be kept regarding the assignment of supervisors and the competency assessments undertaken.

While our amendments strengthen the enforceability of supervision arrangements, we do not believe they increase or require more detailed record-keeping than is currently the case. The Requirements simply ensure that apprentices perform electrical installation work under effective supervision, with a clear understanding of who their supervisor is. Employers are, among other things, responsible for appointing supervisors. They must therefore have full knowledge of the supervisors appointed to supervise apprentices.

Visual contact under direct supervision

As noted above, we proposed to amend the definition of direct supervision to require supervisors to remain within visual contact (sight) AND audible range (earshot) when directly supervising an apprentice. The current Requirements require the supervisor to remain within audible range (earshot) only.

However, during consultation we identified practical challenges with requiring constant visual contact for all tasks. For example, an apprentice might lay cables in roof or under-floor spaces while the supervisor remains inside the main building. This type of work may be appropriate to supervise by remaining only in audible range. However, for some types of high-risk work such as fault-finding and isolation, we consider that visual contact is essential to ensure apprentice safety when under direct supervision. This issue may be a particular challenge for small businesses, where additional supervisors may not be available.

We sought to balance safety concerns with the need to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on small businesses while ensuring apprentices have access to essential training opportunities.

After careful consideration, we decided the best approach is to require visual contact only for isolation and fault-finding tasks performed under direct supervision. For lower risk work, such as the laying cable example above, we consider it appropriate that a supervisor remain within visual contact and/or audible range of the apprentice. This best achieves the purpose of the Requirements to safeguard the most inexperienced apprentice electricians from electrical hazards, while providing opportunities to learn and practice on-the-job skills.

We have updated the Requirements as follows:

- Section 7 – Revised direct supervision to require a supervisor to remain within visual contact and/or audible range of the apprentice.
- Section 9 – Clarified that supervisors must stay within both visual contact and audible range of an apprentice performing isolation procedures.
- Section 10 – Clarified that supervisors must stay within both visual contact and audible range of an apprentice performing fault finding.
- Section 11 – Updated the supervision levels table to specify that supervisors must stay within both visual contact and audible range whilst an apprentice is undertaking either isolation procedures or fault finding.

3.4 Apprentice rights and responsibilities

As outlined in section 2.1, an apprentice is only deemed to be licensed to carry out electrical installation work when working under effective supervision. An apprentice must also have a training contract under the ETRA.

Preliminary position

Before the Requirements were prescribed in the Regulations in 2019, apprentices arguably bore the responsibility for ensuring they met the requirements in the ESA to be licensed to carry out electrical installation work. By prescribing the Requirements in the Regulations, it was clarified that employers and supervisors primarily bore the responsibility for ensuring the requirements in the ESA were met.

However, we appreciate that it is important apprentices know and understand the requirements, do not take it upon themselves to work without effective supervision and are supported to speak up if they feel they are not receiving effective supervision. For these reasons, we included a new section titled 'Apprentices- your rights and responsibilities' in the draft Requirements that:

- informs apprentices that they must not undertake work unless their supervisor is providing effective supervision, since otherwise they are not deemed to be licensed under the ESA; and
- emphasises that apprentices have the right to raise concerns about their supervision, and that supervisors and employers encourage and empower them to do so.

Summary of submissions

NECA requested further clarity about how the new section is to be implemented, supported and monitored.

In the online survey, 84% of respondents agreed with the draft wording. Free text responses included:

- 'The section should emphasise the apprentice's right to refuse to do work without appropriate supervision or if their concerns have not been addressed.'
- 'Apprentices are likely to be sacked if they refuse to do work or raise concerns about their supervision.'
- 'The wording of this section is unclear and could be improved.'

Final position

As explained above, we included the new section to clarify apprentice electricians' obligations under the legislative framework, particularly the requirement that they be working under effective supervision to be considered as working under a licence. To support this, we emphasise the importance of apprentice electricians feeling confident and empowered to raise concerns about the supervision they receive. Employers and supervisors play a key role in encouraging apprentice electricians to speak up if they have concerns about whether their supervision aligns with the requirements.

It is not possible to prescribe how employers and supervisors address this requirement. Rather it is up to the relevant employers and supervisors to create an organisational culture that supports apprentice electricians to understand their rights and responsibilities and to voice any concerns they may have. On this point, we note we have added a requirement for employers to provide supervisors with a physical or digital copy of the Requirements to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities.

If an apprentice electrician has concerns about supervision or other electrical safety issues, they may contact Energy Safe on (03) 9203 9700 or via the [Report a safety issue](#) link on our website. Other government support services available to apprentice electricians via WorkSafe, Apprenticeships Victoria and the VRQA are described in section 2.3 of this document.

3.5 Scope of the Requirements

Preliminary position

Both the current Requirements and the draft Requirements consulted upon refer to the work performed by apprentices as 'electrical work', meaning the Requirements are for the purposes of

ensuring an apprentice receives appropriate and effective supervision when doing electrical work. The Requirements do not extend to supervision of an apprentice doing non-electrical work.

Summary of submissions

NECA

A NECA member noted that some businesses employ apprentices under their internal training programs where the apprentices work on large civil works projects, laying conduit and hauling cable and getting a broader understanding of basic safety and product knowledge that is beneficial for their learning. The member suggested these opportunities would be reduced as a result of the proposed supervision ratios.

ETU

The ETU suggested the Requirements should cover lineworkers, suggesting that the definition of 'relevant electrical licence' specified in subsection 5.3 of the draft Requirements that a supervisor must hold to supervise an apprentice be expanded to include electrical lineworkers.

Final position

In submissions and during follow-up meetings with stakeholders it has become apparent that there may be some confusion about when the Requirements apply. As noted above, the Requirements are for the purposes of ensuring an apprentice receives appropriate supervision when doing electrical work. The Requirements do not apply to other work that may be done by apprentices on work sites and therefore do not limit the continuation of broader training as described by the NECA member.

We acknowledge the benefits of training programs as described, which give apprentices a broader awareness and understanding of projects and work practices and products and we encourage the continuation of these programs, so long as they are done in a safe and supportive work environment that adhere to OHS laws and other usual applicable requirements. For example, as discussed in section 2.3 of this document, there is a continuing requirement under the OHSA for employers to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that their workplace is safe and without risks to employees' health. There is also an obligation to follow the procedures outlined under any SWMS prepared for that work.

In considering this issue, however, we have further reflected on the scope of the new Requirements. While the ESA broadly requires effective supervision for apprentices doing 'electrical work', the Regulations more narrowly requires effective supervision in accordance with the Requirements only for 'electrical installation work.' To align with this distinction, we have narrowed the scope of the new Requirements and replaced references to 'electrical work' with 'electrical installation work' throughout.

With respect to the ETU's suggestion to expand the application of the Requirements to electrical lineworkers, this would first require amendments to the Regulations. As such, we are unable to accommodate this request currently.

In summary, employers and supervisors must provide effective supervision in accordance with the Requirements when an apprentice electrician is carrying out electrical installation work. Where an apprentice electrician is carrying out other work, they are still subject to the general protections provided under the ETRA and OHSA but the Requirements do not apply. Apprentices also have access to the programs provided by Apprenticeships Victoria (see section 2.3 of this document for further background and information).

3.6 Other matters

Some more minor issues were raised in submissions. These are outlined in Table 3 below along with our response:

Table 3: Other matters raised in submissions

Submitter	Submission	Response
ETU	Recommended adding 'testing to confirm electricity supply pre-isolation'.	We agree that this is a helpful additional step for the apprentice electrician to undertake prior to isolation of supply. We have added text as recommended in subsection 9.1 of the new Requirements.
NECA	The draft Requirements do not outline whether a fourth year can undertake basic fault finding with direct, general or broad supervision.	We have added text in subsection 10.2 to clarify that a fourth-year apprentice may undertake basic fault finding under general supervision. We have also updated Table 2 in section 11 to separate basic fault finding from advanced fault finding and to specify the level of supervision required for third- and fourth-year apprentices.
MEA	The draft Requirements are silent on the eligibility of fourth-year apprentices to perform confirmation of isolation works under direct supervision. MEA suggests that this omission is an oversight in drafting and urges Energy Safe to include this under 10.2 in the second bullet point.	Section 9 and section 11 both outline that fourth-year apprentices may perform confirmation of isolation works under direct supervision. Therefore, we consider this has already been covered and does not require additional text in the new Requirements.
NECA	A definition of fault-finding has not been included and will restrict first and second years from some fault-finding activities that are safe to conduct. NECA does not support adopting the definition of fault-finding in the Electricity Safety (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 2020, nor the definition used in AS/NZS 4836.	We consider that fault-finding is a higher risk type of electrical installation work that is only suited to third- and fourth-year apprentices under the prescribed supervision levels. While we note NECA does not support the definitions currently provided for in legislation, we believe it appropriate to adopt consistent definitions. We have therefore included the definition of fault-finding from the <i>Electricity Safety (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 2020</i> in section 3, ensuring a common definition across the electricity safety framework.
Confidential submitter	Energy Safe should produce a separate guidance document for apprentices, supervisors and employers that can be distributed at sign-up events, as part of the industry communications campaign.	We will consider this request as part of our communications campaign. We will also engage with Apprenticeships Victoria on the information sheets to be provided to apprentices as per recommendation 6 of the Apprenticeships Taskforce's Final Report, with a view to including relevant information about supervision requirements (see section 2.4 of this document for further background and information on this work).
ETU	Energy Safe should reinstate the flow chart in the current Requirements to assist	The flow chart is intended as guidance. In the new Requirements we seek to ensure clarity by not mixing legal obligations with guidance, as is the case with the current Requirements.

	supervisors to determine the correct supervision level.	However, we appreciate that industry may require some guidance to support their understanding and application of the new Requirements. We will consider including the flow chart or alternative guidance in separate communications to industry.
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3.7 Implementation and timing

While we did not request specific comments on implementation during the consultation, stakeholders suggested in the follow-up meetings that there needed to be a sufficient transition period for industry to adapt to the new Requirements.

Energy Safe believes immediate adoption of the new Requirements will lead to improved outcomes and realisation of safety benefits sooner. However, we also understand that some businesses will need to change their work practices to align with the new Requirements and that this will take time. Accordingly, we accept that there needs to be an appropriate transition to the new Requirements.

We have considered two options, as follows:

1. Staged implementation of the new Requirements. For example, delayed implementation of aspects that will require more substantive changes to work practices (e.g., the new supervisor to apprentice ratios) but immediate implementation of other aspects (e.g., amended responsibilities of employers and supervisors).
2. Delayed implementation of all aspects of the new Requirements.

Under option 1, the benefits of clearer requirements will be realised sooner while businesses have time to adjust their work practices where more substantive changes may be needed to align with the new Requirements. However, we are conscious that a staged implementation of the new Requirements could be confusing for industry. It will also be more straightforward for Energy Safe to run communication and education campaigns where there is a single date by which the new Requirements must be adopted. As such, we consider option 2 to be the preferred option. This does not preclude industry from adopting the new Requirements sooner, ahead of them formally coming into effect.

We consider 5 months to be a reasonable transition period for industry, with the new Requirements taking effect from 1 September 2025. The current Requirements continue to apply until that date although we encourage industry to transition sooner wherever possible so that the safety benefits are realised sooner.

4 Next steps

The new Requirements are available on our [Effective Supervision](#) webpage. They take effect from 1 September 2025. Until that time, the current Requirements continue to apply (also available on the Effective Supervision webpage).

We will undertake a range of communication and education activities to assist industry with the transition to the new Requirements prior to the date of effect. We will engage with apprentices, supervisors and employers to ensure they are aware of and understand the new Requirements with additional guidance provided as needed.