



EE-Oz Training Standards

*The Australian Government declared
Industry Skills Council for ElectroComms and EnergyUtilities.*

SUBMISSION PAPER

to

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee

Regarding

Protecting Local Jobs (Regulating Enterprise Migration Agreements) Bill 2012 [Provisions]

September 2012

Background

EE-Oz Training Standards

The ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Industries Skills Council, trading as EE-Oz Training Standards, represent the following sectors, including those in both training and technical roles;

- General electrical installation, communications and Air-conditioning and refrigeration to commercial, industrial and domestic customers
- Electricity distribution, transmission and rail
- Electricity generation
- Gas Transmission

EE-Oz's brief is to develop, in consultation with industry stakeholders (regulators, industry associates, employee and employer representative bodies, training providers, standards bodies and government), training standards for the industries under its coverage. It also represents the interests of these organisations on training related matters in the public forum. The industries under EE-Oz's coverage, the energy sector industries, provide essential services which underpin the productivity of the wider economy.

The essential nature of these services and the inherently dangerous nature of work carried out in these sectors; require robust regulatory and industrial arrangements to ensure individual, public and enterprise safety and continuity of supply.

Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) were created with a core mandate to provide regular public advice on the state of the industries under their coverage and facilitate the development and continuous improvement of national Training Packages reflective of industry's skills needs. This process requires extensive industry consultation, bringing together key industry groups, industry and enterprise practitioners, regulators, technical experts, training experts and the community. This process ensures collective ownership and currency of industry training standards and uniquely positions ISCs at the cross section of industry opinion with stakeholders representing all major industry groups.

EE-Oz has developed strong industry partnerships to successfully develop, broker and coordinate training provision under the Enterprise Based Productivity Places Program (EBPPP) and the Critical Skills Investment Fund (CSIF). EE-Oz continues to work with industry to upskill Australian workers via the ongoing the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF).

Response

EE-Oz as the Industry Skills Council for the energy sector industries recommends that the Senate Committee should consider the following points in relation to addressing of skill shortages in the energy sector trades and more generally, via Enterprise Migration Agreements to maximise the participation of Australian residents in employment opportunities being offered by those seeking to take advantage of Enterprise Migration Agreements to meet skills needs.

(a) Enterprise Migration Agreements (EMA) should ensure that employed skilled migrants are assessed as qualified or up-skilled to work in accordance with relevant Australian standards.

- Migrant workers who are to be employed under an EMA must be qualified in their country of origin to do that work for which they are to be employed in Australia.
- Migrant workers who are to be employed under an EMA must be assessed by an Australian Registered Training Organisation (RTO) against industry endorsed Australian training standards to guarantee that they are competent to work in Australia. Therefore, prior to commencing work in Australia, migrant workers should be assessed against Australian standards and regulations as being qualified to carry out work in Australia and any skills gaps identified.
- Where migrant workers are assessed as not meeting Australian Standards, employers who use EMA's should provide migrant workers with training to address any gaps in their skills, knowledge and/or work performance capabilities.
- EE-Oz in co-operation with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (Trades Recognition Australia) and the State and Territory Industry Regulators, is working to harmonise the multiple, historical training and assessment processes for skilled migration into unified pathways which can be consistently applied for each of the energy sector trades including Electrician, Distribution Lineworker and Refrigeration.

EE-Oz as the industry Skills Council for the energy sector trades strongly supports the development and application of these harmonised training and assessment pathways to all classes of permanent and temporary skilled migration and wishes to work closely with government and industry to ensure that these can be implemented within EMAs whilst protecting Australian jobs.

(b) EMA Applicants must offer Apprenticeship positions to Australian residents to ensure that opportunities for Australians to gain employment are maximised

- EMAs are considered a short term strategy to address skill needs. Alleviating longer term skills shortage in Australia will require an increase in training commitment by enterprises. Enterprises wishing to participate in an EMA should be required to contribute to this longer term strategy by creating apprenticeships for Australian residents.
- It is worth noting that economic cycles will influence the industry apprenticeship program. In other words, when there is a slowdown in Australian economy, employers will be less likely to take up apprentices. This short term reaction will result in a longer term lack of qualified practitioners and with a return to more normal economic conditions, a higher demand for tradespeople from a diminished supply.
- Unless EMA participants are required to develop the Australian workforce by employing and training apprentices, such a cyclic pattern of replacing Australian apprenticeships with reliance on migrant workers under EMAs can only exacerbate the trend of short and long term skill shortages and damaging the job prospects of Australian Citizens.
- it is worth emphasizing that in addition to offering apprenticeship and employment positions to qualified Australia workers, opportunities should be made available for unqualified Australian citizens to take up training and employment under an Australian apprenticeship contract of training.
- Apprentices engaged by enterprises participating in EMAs should be guaranteed access to:
 - ISC training brokerage services
 - Industry Apprenticeship Mentoring Services
 - Competency Based Progression
 - Industry endorsed blended learning resources

EE-Oz, as the ISC for the energy sector industry, has developed the capacity to broker partnerships between industries and RTOs for the delivery of training and assessment services to apprentices employed by EMA participants.

(c) In protecting and supporting local jobs, the EMA provisions should also require an investment in internal “skill migration” combined with training up-skilling.

- Skills shortages which may require enterprises to engage in EMAs offer significant opportunities to restructure Australia’s workforce. Internal “skills migration” should also be boosted to ensure that opportunities for Australian residents, particularly unemployed young Australians are maximised.
- The challenges of remote geographic locations and accompanying access limitations need to be overcome and ensure that the economic opportunities and benefits can be shared across the economy.
- EE-Oz advocates an approach which provides for the initial engagement of suitable cohorts in their local communities to undergo pre-deployment training and induction programs such as a pre-apprenticeship so they may be equipped to take-up employment in industry.
- Development of such a strategy aimed at the selection and engagement of groups rather than individuals would enhance mutual support within the group and provide a team approach. This would mimic the strategies typical of Enterprise Migration Agreements but to the benefit of Australian residents rather than off-shore workers.
- Such a program would need to be supported by ongoing training and development opportunities supported by appropriate team leadership and mentoring services.

EE-Oz as the ISC for the energy sector industry has a strong interest the success of such a model to protect Australian jobs and stands ready to support an initiative to establish program which could be used to ensure that Australian jobs can be protected and grown whilst meeting industry’s need to meet skill shortages.