

**Submission
No 1**

SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW

Name: Mr David Stevens

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Submission to the Legislative committee on economic development regarding skill shortages in NSW.

About the author.

I am a recent migrant to Australia (1/12/10). I moved here to be with my family. We live in Port Macquarie on the NSW Mid-North coast. I am studying for my 'Electrician Cert III' at the local TAFE. I am self-funding and have 'Recognised prior learning' from studies in the U.K.

The problem(s)

Firstly, Port Macquarie has a large population of 'semi-retired' electricians. The majority are financially comfortable having made money in the cities or mines. They do not employ others nor take on apprentices yet soak up available work locally for a cheap rate 'just to keep their hand in'. Therefore, this is part of the problem as it cuts down the amount of opportunities in the local area.

Secondly, and mainly, there is the problem of 'e-profiling'. 'e-profiling' is a mandatory part of the electricians course. It is an on-line work assessment system administered by 'www.eprofiling.com.au'. It works by the student/apprentice filling in on-line job cards as to what they have been doing at work in that week. The card then gets forwarded to their employer/supervising licensed electrician who then verifies the card. Easy. And that is how it should work. However, in reality, the system is flawed. The skills range required is beyond the scope of most employers. Businesses tend to specialise in a certain field – some may only do new-builds, some solar installs, some data etc- and so the apprentices may not achieve the skills set to satisfy the demands of e-profiling. Added to this is that the system is being abused by employers who are not filling in the cards for the apprentices/students. It is simply not in their interests to do so. Most of the work is done by apprentices for less than minimum wage. If the apprentice gets their 'ticket' then

they will want more money or leave for better pay or conditions .My situation is not unique.The largest rate of attrition in my class is due directly to e-profiling not academic failure.People with young families have been forced to leave the area to find work in the cities in order to carry on with their studies.Young apprentices are afraid of being sacked for 'nagging' their bosses and so,never complete the course.

In summary,e-profile has given unscrupulous employers the power to exploit in a way that amounts to professional imprisonment.

I hope by writing this letter I have succeeded in highlighting the problems faced by apprentices in the electrotechnical field.I do not comment on behalf of any other persons or parties and can only comment from my own personal perspective,in my own area and can only hope that this is a localised situation.

If any further clarification is required on the issues raised then I would prefer that you contact me at the email address supplied with this correspondence.

Yours sincerely

D.Stevens