

Submission: Occupational Licensing Submitted by: Weld Australia Date: 02 June 2025

Occupational Licensing

Executive Summary

Welders and welding inspectors have not been licenced by State Governments for many years. In lieu Weld Australia established a national scheme to certify personnel against Australian and International Standards. The scheme is managed through a national database and audited bi-annually.

Recommendations

1. State based licensing should be replaced by a national licensing system run by the appropriate trade body.
2. Qualification and Certification must be **mandatory for all trades.**
3. Certification must include a capstone test to an appropriate Standard.
4. State based licensing should be replaced by a national licensing system run by the appropriate trade body.
5. Qualification and Certification must be **mandatory for all trades.**
6. Trade training must include a test to standard.
7. Uncertified tradespeople must not work unsupervised.

Discussion

Weld Australia is the Australian member of the International Institute of Welding (IIW) and the peak body for welding in Australia. We have 400 Corporate Members representing 20,000 individual welders, inspectors, supervisors, technologists and engineers.

Member companies include power generators, fossil and renewable; manufactures; fabricators; resource miners and processors; defence primes; Government entities; steel makers and distributors; TAFE, Private RTO's and Universities. We are the primary training and certification body for post trade qualifications and provide learning resources to trade training organisations, apprentice employers and schools.

Welders and welding inspectors are no longer licenced by State Governments. It falls to Weld Australia to run a national scheme to certify personnel against Standards.

Certification criteria and processes are set by Weld Australia for Australian Standards and the IIW for International Standards and qualifications. To gain Certification an individual must have a relevant qualification, a specified period of experience in a relevant role and be able to demonstrate the required competency. References are taken from certified supervising staff to confirm competency.

Qualifications and certification are managed through a national online database and audited by the IIW and JASANZ. Weld Australia also certifies companies to International and Australian Standards to ensure quality and safety of product and personnel. To comply with Standards all structural and pressure welds are required to be inspected and 'signed off' by a Certified Welding Inspector or Supervisor.

The purpose of licensing or certification of a tradesperson is to ensure that work is delivered by a competent person to a Standard.

Having gone through the license requirements for trades in the building industry there seems, in many cases, to be no guarantee of competency or mention of Standards. Obviously, every trade has a different system and each state its own requirement.

International Standards

Executive Summary

Weld Australia Staff and members are represented on all relevant Australian and ISO Standards Committees. This activity is largely funded by the Association.

Australian Standards are substantially less onerous than ISO and are necessary to allow for the different working conditions and requirements of Australian Industry.

Australian standards do not impede local manufacturers from exporting to other countries as it is mandated in the contract that the product complies with the design and manufacturing standards enforced in the target country.

What does impact on Australian productivity is competition from imported product which is not required to comply to any Standard and is therefore inevitably cheaper, not as safe and of poorer quality.

The current wave of cheap imported product has the potential to destroy what is left of the Australian steel manufacturing.

Recommendations

1. Make compliance to Australian Standards mandatory for all goods imported into Australia.
2. Do not change the existing Standards system, it is amongst the best in the World.
3. Increase the subsidy to Standards Australia to reduce the price to Industry.

Discussion

Weld Australia Staff and members are represented on all relevant Australian and ISO Standards Committees.

We have an outstanding reputation for the quality of our Standards which are often copied by ISO and other international standards bodies.

The issue with Australian Standards is not their quality or any imagined impediment to delivery but the fact that there is no mandated compliance.

What does impact on Australian productivity is competition from imported product which does not comply to any Standard and is therefore inevitably cheaper, not as safe and of poorer quality.

The current system should remain as is.

In detail:

1. Australian standards rarely impede local manufacturers from exporting to other countries as it is usually mandated that the product complies with the design and manufacturing standards enforced in the target country.
2. It is common for items manufactured overseas and imported into Australia being sold and said to comply with local standards used in the country of origin. Depending on the country of origin, whilst such claims can usually be verified via inspection for example, it is known that some compliance certificates supplied are a work of fiction.
3. It is common for standards writers throughout the world to take cognisance of what writers in other countries are drafting and modify the requirements specified to suit local conditions.
4. Australian standards have for over 20 years recognised major standards used by our trading partners, and products manufactured to those standards have been imported without restriction or incident.
5. Whilst Standards Australia currently has limited resources to draft local standards, its expert committees have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to take cognisance of standards produced or used in other countries and either modify to suit our safety requirements in particular or readily adopt those standards without modification after expert review, especially ISO, European and British standards.
6. Canadian safety standards in the welding area often give cognisance to what happens in Australia and Australia is seen by them as the world leader in this respect.
7. On the labour side, Australia has adopted ISO9606-1 for welder qualifications when welding steel products. Recognition of this standard has been included in a range of Australian welding and related standards, and it is used widely internationally by our trading partners (and competitors). Note that this standard is currently being revised to cover other materials and it is planned to adopt it when published by ISO.
8. It is essential for experts to review all standards prior to adoption and seek public comment. For example, in the welding field, ISO standards are usually based on European practices which are inevitably more complex (with additional compliance costs) than the USA-based practices used in Australia. Such standards are considered for adoption on a case-by-case basis.
9. Australian experts attend ISO meetings, and our voice is heard and considered when drafting ISO standards. It is difficult to get our voice heard in other countries and this must be considered if planning to recognise standards used in other countries.
10. Whatever standards are used, consideration should be given to enforcement particularly in the building and construction industries where poor practice and non-compliance issues are rife as evidenced in the issue being encountered in Sydney with multi-story residential construction.

Geoff Crittenden
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