

# Victorian Energy Upgrades Consultation.

Improving the supply of accredited installers, and meeting government policy objectives.

Chris Lehmann 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023



## Introduction

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. Our website is [www.masterelectricians.com.au](http://www.masterelectricians.com.au)

### **Growing the number of accredited split system air con installers.**

MEA has previously raised the issue of how Electrical Contractors can help Solar Vic deliver the HH&C program, and by extension assist the Victorian government achieve its stated policy goals of –

- phasing out gas for cooking and heating
- ambitious Victorian targets of carbon emission reductions.

MEA had a meeting with members of SolarVic, ESV, and VBA in early 2022 with a hope of using a pathway identified on the VBA website (see below) to enable the large cohort of Victorian Electricians that have a -

- Cert2 Split System qualification and
- ARCTIC Refrigerant Handling License

to install/replace split systems for the HH&C and VEU programs. During this meeting it became evident that the VBA had since tightened their requirements around gaining a restricted plumbing license and it was a 3 year process that basically meant that an electrical worker had to complete a Cert 3 in Refrigeration to be able to install and certify split systems.

MEA would like to open discussions on this topic again, and to try and find a clear and efficient pathway for electricians to install and certify split system air conditioners as they do legally and compliantly in other jurisdictions in Australia. WE would like a number of factors to be considered -

1. It appears that there is potentially not enough installers signed onto your HH&C and VEU programs to help deliver on its targets, but more importantly the de-gasification agenda of the government and the Carbon reduction goals more generally. There is a large untapped resource of electricians who are practically qualified to be able to safely perform these works to achieve Carbon Reduction Goals and the de-gasification agenda.
2. Electricians are currently able to install split systems in Victoria if they possess a Cert2 Refrigeration and an ARCTIC license, they just can't certify them without the Restricted Plumbing. The plumbing portion of the install carries the least risk to personnel and property, the hurdle doesn't seem to justify the risk. It seems to be a clear example of unnecessary red tape.
3. Currently refrigeration mechanics, plumbers, and fitters all have a pathway to obtain a restricted electrical license which carries a far greater risk of personnel and property damage. It seems like a restriction of trade and a double standard of demarcation to refuse a restricted plumbing license, especially when the installation of condensate drains is covered in the Cert2 Refrigeration course, and the VBA has such clear and accessible guidance documents on its website as well, it seems to be a missed opportunity for Industry Productivity and to support small and family businesses.

4. An Electrical Contractor employing workers with an electrical license, Cert2 Split System qualification, ARTIC refrigeration handling license, and a restricted plumbing license could perform the whole installation job in a single visit for a consumer without having to incur the cost of having a plumber certify the installation, adding \$200 approx to the cost of a job, there is a clear Consumer Benefit to enabling a clear and efficient pathway for electrical workers to obtain a restricted plumbing license.

MEA understand that Solar Vic, ESV and the VBA are different departments with a few different stakeholder Ministers, but I am hoping that we can have an open conversation about a way forward to deliver on government objectives, support small business and consumers and to deliver a productivity dividend for the citizens of Victoria.

## VBA Restricted Air Conditioning Accreditation Pathway

On the VBA website <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/plumbing/registration-licensing/apply-for-a-specialised-or-restricted-class> there appears to be a pathway for the issuing of a restricted plumbing certificate *for an aspect of work*, where a form - [https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/102568/Statement-of-your-Mechanical-Services-restricted-to-single-head-split-systems-work-knowledge-and-experience.pdf](https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/102568/Statement-of-your-Mechanical-Services-restricted-to-single-head-split-systems-work-knowledge-and-experience.pdf) can be lodged specifying the nature of work along with an accompanying referee report [https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/102569/Technical-Referee-Report-Mechanical-Services-restricted-to-single-head-split-systems.pdf](https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/102569/Technical-Referee-Report-Mechanical-Services-restricted-to-single-head-split-systems.pdf) from a licensed plumber.

This pathway does not now appear to be available as explained to us in our meetings with VBA, MEA believe that completion of a Cert2 and the attainment of an ARCTIC refrigerant handling license is adequate enough protection for Victorian consumers and is the standard in other Australian Commonwealth jurisdictions, however MEA would be happy for VBA and the Victorian government to reinstate the previous pathway that was available and outlined above. This would get a larger cohort of accredited installers into the economy in a shortened timeframe, to support the stated policy goals of the Victorian Government.

## Conclusion

We submit this request for a licensing policy review as an addendum to our general response in the questionnaire to the VEU consultation currently underway. MEA look forward to advancing this matter to help achieve the stated aims of Victorian Government Policy, reduce costs to consumers, decrease red tape for small businesses, and providing extra opportunities in employment and profitability of electrical contracting businesses in Victoria.