

**DRAFT** SECOND READING SPEECH  
HON MICHAEL FERGUSON MP  
*Mutual Recognition (Tasmania) Amendment Bill 2021*

Mr Speaker,

This Bill will introduce in Tasmania the national Automatic Mutual Recognition of Occupations scheme by putting in place the new arrangements agreed to by National Cabinet in December 2020.

The goal of automatic mutual recognition is to promote the freedom of movement of service providers across Australian states and territories by reducing unnecessary regulatory red tape, while maintaining high safety standards.

This Bill builds on the existing mutual recognition arrangements, which have been in place since the early 1990s.

The principle of mutual recognition is that, if a person is registered to carry out an occupation in one state or territory, they should be able to carry out the same occupation in another, without the need for that person's qualifications and experience to be assessed again.

In 2015, the Productivity Commission was asked to examine the mutual recognition framework. While it found that these arrangements generally work well, it indicated there would economic benefits from automating such processes.

This is because, under the existing mutual recognition arrangements, a worker must go through a separate registration process, and may need to pay an additional registration or licence fee, before starting work in another state or territory.

In 2020, as part of a deregulation agenda, Australian governments agreed that the Council on Federal Financial Relations would prioritise and lead the development of a uniform scheme to enable occupational licences to be automatically recognised across jurisdictions.

Based on advice from CFFR, at National Cabinet in December 2020, Governments committed to establishing a widespread uniform scheme for automatic recognition of licensed occupations for the purpose of streamlining processes across jurisdictions to commence from 1 July 2021.

This was formalised in the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Occupational Registration.

At its core, an automatic mutual recognition scheme will improve job mobility.

It will help employers access registered skilled workers more quickly, and at lower cost, by more seamlessly allowing employees to move where they are most needed.

It will match job seekers with employment opportunities.

Mr Speaker,

To fully realise the benefits of automatic mutual recognition, it is important that the scheme is consistent across the states and territories. This is achieved by this Bill implementing the framework put in place by the law which recently passed the Australian Parliament.

However, our laws must always be what is in the best interests of Tasmanians. In this regard, the Bill provides the ability for the Governor, at any time, to cease the automatic mutual recognition scheme, or terminate the ability for the Australian Government to make future changes to the scheme, through the referral of power in this Bill.

The Bill provides for appropriate parliamentary oversight of this process as any such declaration by the Governor must be approved by both Houses of the Parliament.

Mr Speaker,

Automatic mutual recognition will have tangible outcomes for Tasmanian workers and businesses.

It will result in increased job mobility and decreased costs for workers, consumers and businesses.

Employers will be able to access skilled workers more quickly, and at lower cost. This will boost competition, productivity and economic growth.

Tasmanian workers will be able to more quickly react to changing job markets elsewhere.

In the unfortunate event of a natural disaster, Tasmanians workers will be able to quickly respond to address immediate impacts or contribute to longer term recovery on the mainland. Similarly, mainland workers will be able to more quickly react to assist Tasmanians and aid economic recovery.

Importantly, the Tasmanian Government is ensuring that the existing regulations put in place to protect our community will be kept under the new scheme where mainland workers decide to operate in our State.

I will now step through some of these safeguards.

A person subject to disciplinary actions or who has conditions on their registration as a result of disciplinary or legal action in their home state or territory will not be eligible for automatic mutual recognition in Tasmania.

Mr Speaker,

Any conditions a person has on their home licence will apply here in Tasmania.

A worker wishing to work in this State must also satisfy a working with vulnerable people character test, where required by our law.

In addition, our local laws will continue to apply to everyone carrying on the activity in the State. This includes the need for workers to meet financial requirements, such as having insurance.

Tasmanian regulators will also be able to take action, including suspending or cancelling a person's registration, consistent with Tasmanian law.

Mr Speaker,

As Minister for Finance, I will be able to exempt, on a temporary basis, an occupation from the automatic mutual recognition scheme until 30 June 2022.

I will also be able to make longer-term exemptions for an occupation where a certain risk cannot be satisfactorily addressed.

The new scheme may not be appropriate for certain occupations from the outset. For some there will need to be a transitional period or more time needed to figure out how automatic mutual recognition should work.

These exemptions are able to be made by me under the Commonwealth law, once this Bill has passed.

However, what I can say is, temporary exemption arrangements in this State are likely to be broad and in line with the other states and territories where automatic mutual recognition is already in place.

Possible longer term exemptions will be considered during the temporary exemption phase, as agencies work through whether any changes can be made to address the risks identified, or whether a longer term exemption is more appropriate.

Mr Speaker,

This Bill will increase the strength and resilience of the Tasmanian economy.

Automatic mutual recognition arrangements will result in increased job mobility and decreased costs for Tasmanian workers, consumers and businesses.

It is critical that Tasmanians can take up job opportunities wherever they arise.

The scheme will also have benefits for Tasmanian businesses and consumers, as it will allow workers from the mainland to quickly and flexibly respond to sudden increases in demand in particular areas.

Competition will also increase, resulting in lower prices and improved service quality for Tasmanian consumers.

In order to realise the benefits of the scheme, and consistent with the National Cabinet agreement, automatic mutual recognition in Tasmania will commence shortly after passage of the Bill.

Mr Speaker,

I commend this Bill to the House.