

SECOND READING SPEECH

Occupational Licensing National Law Bill 2011

Mr Speaker, the *Occupational Licensing National Law Bill 2011* will allow Tasmania to join the National Occupational Licensing System.

Industry and Governments from all around Australia have been critical of the plethora of different licensing systems that are in place in the jurisdictions. License holders are financially penalised by not being able to use their licences in other jurisdictions. Industry has had to comply with multiple regulatory regimes. There is a lack of consistency about the standard of work that should be delivered by licence holders and the qualifications required in the different jurisdictions.

Mr Speaker, these fundamental problems along with other licensing differences such as; scope of work, licence duration and penalties have been recognised by the Council of Australian Governments and national uniformity was targeted as a key economic reform area.

CoAG were of the view that one licensing regime could be developed to regulate occupations. The following occupations will be regulated from 1 July 2012

- Airconditioning and refrigeration mechanics,
- Plumbers and gasfitters,
- Electricians, and
- Property agents.

They also recognised that further occupations could likewise be pulled in at a later date under the same national licensing umbrella. Building and Building related occupations have been identified to commence in 2013.

Mr Speaker, the Bill before us facilitates the adoption of the national Act that has been drafted with the assistance of all Chief Parliamentary Counsels from around the country.

This work has culminated in the commencement of the national Act, the *Occupational Licensing National Law Act 2010* in Victoria. At this point in time Mr Speaker this national Act simply allows for the establishment of the National Occupational Licensing

Authority that is necessary to provide for the consistent operation and administration of the new national system.

The Bill before us will allow the national Laws, the Victorian Act to become the law in Tasmania.

Mr Speaker, when the National Occupational Licensing System commences the following benefits will be realised;

- licences issued by the national licensing body will allow licensees to operate in all Australian jurisdictions;
- licensing arrangements will be effective and proportional to that required for consumer protection, and worker and public health and safety, and at the same time ensuring economic efficiency and equity of access;
- a consistent skill base for licensed occupations will be facilitated;
- effective coordination between the national licensing body and relevant jurisdictional regulators will result;
- national consistency with licensing structures and policy across comparable occupational areas;

- national consistency of regulation affecting the conduct requirements of licensees;
- national consistency with the approaches to disciplinary arrangements affecting licensees;
- there will be flexibility to deal with jurisdiction or industry specific issues; and
- public access to information about licensees.

The on-the-ground impact from the commencement of the Bill before us will not be obvious until the license areas move across into the national system which is anticipated to happen from July 2012.

Mr Speaker the licensing requirements for each individual occupation will be contained in specific regulations that are currently under development. When each set of regulations are drafted they will be sent out for public comment and then laid on the Table in every Australian House of Parliament. If any jurisdiction has concerns about the content they can be disallowed and hence not apply in that jurisdiction. If multiple

jurisdictions have concerns and disallow them, they become disallowed nationally.

Mr Speaker, all Tasmanian occupational licensing legislation will progressively disappear as the application of the national system rolls out and the existing staff from the States and Territories will provide the administration for the new licensing regime acting as regulators for the National Occupational Licensing Authority.

Mr Speaker, lack of consistency between the various licensing regimes around the country has caused both significant frustration and costs to license holders and industry. This CoAG initiative has the potential to rectify these problems that have plagued the Australian economy for years.

This is not about handing powers to the Commonwealth as all jurisdictions have participated in the development of the system and remain active stakeholders in the new licensing Authority.

It is important to note Mr Speaker that by signing up to the national system Tasmania is not required to license any occupations we do not currently license and conversely we can continue to license occupations which are not part of the national system. For example Tasmania currently licences installers of automotive LPG systems and this occupation has not been flagged for inclusion in the national licensing regime.

What is also important is the fact that all the specific licensing detail will come back to this House by way of proposed regulation allowing us to be confident that the proposed national licensing system is and remains in the best interests of; Tasmanian workers, Tasmanian industry and the Tasmanian community.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.