

# CODE OF PRACTICE

## FOR THE SALE OF ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION PRODUCTS TO THE PUBLIC

### Preface

#### WHY DO WE NEED A CODE OF PRACTICE?

Electricity has become an essential commodity in our community. We rely on it in nearly all aspects of our daily living. But as well as being a benevolent saviour, it can also be a malevolent killer.

Each year people get killed when they attempt to do their own electrical installation and maintenance work, no matter how simple the job.

In many cases, they buy electrical installation materials, accessories and products, then attempt to install them themselves instead of using a registered electrical contractor.

#### People give many reasons for doing their own electrical work:

- didn't realise it was dangerous;
- didn't realise it was illegal;
- enjoy do it yourself (DIY) work;
- thought they possessed the appropriate knowledge and skills;
- persuaded by others to do it;
- too expensive to employ a registered electrical contractor (in some cases, the cost to install the product by a registered electrical contractor may be more than the purchase price of the product.)

But the fact remains that it is dangerous and illegal for electrical installation work to be carried out by other than registered electrical contractors.

The public must be informed about the danger and illegality of doing their own electrical installation work. Electrical Regulatory Authorities throughout Australia have conducted various public and industry awareness campaigns to promote electrical safety and these have included information about the dangers and illegality of unlicensed people doing their own electrical installation work.

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to help suppliers and retailers play their part in informing the buying public of the need to use only registered electrical contractors to fit electrical installation materials, accessories and products.

#### WHAT IS A CODE OF PRACTICE?

A code of practice is a document which specifies the agreed manner in which an activity or process should be conducted.

This Code of Practice specifies various guidelines which should be adopted when selling certain electrical installation materials, accessories and products.

Various electrical safety regulations in all Australian States and Territories specify that only licensed electricians or registered electrical contractors may carry out electrical installation work. The reasoning behind this law is that for untrained persons, the act of carrying out any electrical installation work can in itself be dangerous. In addition, electrical installation work which is performed incorrectly, no matter how simple the job, can present a life threatening and potential fire risk to both the worker and the subsequent user of the installation.

This Code of Practice is not law. To become law it would have to be mandated in legislation. As it is not mandatory, the Code merely represents a set of conditions which have been accepted with consensus of many industry members and should be adopted voluntarily.

Following this Code will enable suppliers and retailers to be seen to be acting responsibly when selling electrical installation materials, accessories and products which can present a danger to the purchaser if installed illegally.

#### WHO PREPARED THIS CODE OF PRACTICE?

This Code of Practice was prepared by the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector in conjunction with electrical regulatory authorities throughout Australia for consultation purposes in Victoria.

## The Code

### **WHICH ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS CAN ONLY BE INSTALLED BY REGISTERED ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS?**

Electrical safety regulations in Australian States and Territories prohibit electrical installing work being carried out by other than registered electrical contractors or licensed electricians. So although it is legal to buy products like electrical cable, switches and power points, it is illegal and dangerous for unlicensed persons to install the items.

The Regulations DO permit unlicensed persons to connect plugs to their own electrical cords. However, the use of ready made extension cords is encouraged as they may be safer than home wired ones. An incorrectly wired plug can be fatal.

### **LABELLING**

The packaging of electrical installation materials, accessories and products which require connection to electrical wiring should include a prominent warning which advises that the product must only be installed by a registered electrical contractor or licensed electrician. The sorts of products which require a warning label on their packaging are switches, power points, cables etc.

Most Australian manufacturers already display the warning label on the blister pack packing for these types of products, but a check should be made to make sure the label is present.

### **NOTICES**

Many electrical installation materials, accessories and products are sold in bulk without specific packing – things like switches, electrical cable etc. In these cases, a prominent warning poster should be located on the display shelf near the product. The poster should carry the message that only registered electrical contractors must be used to fit the electrical installation materials, accessories and products.

### **ADVERTISING**

Many electrical installation materials, accessories and products which require connection to electrical wiring are advertised for sale, both in the written and audio/visual media, words to the effect “must only be installed by a registered electrical contractor” should be included in the advertisement. The warning should be displayed prominently and in the immediate vicinity of any graphical representation of the product.

### **CUSTOMER ADVICE**

A good indication that a customer is not a registered electrical contractor or licensed electrician is when he or she asks the seller for advice on how to connect an electrical product to installed wiring.

In such cases, it is more prudent for sales staff to advise the customer that the electrical installation materials, accessories and products must only be installed by a registered electrical contractor or licensed electrician, and a Certificate of Electrical Safety issued to the customer.

## More Information

If you want more information about warning labels for electrical products, contact the product manufacturer. Alternatively, you may contact your local electrical regulator at the number shown below:

### **Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector**

Level 3, Building 2, 4 Riverside Quay **SOUTHBANK VIC 3006**

Phone: (03) 9203 9700

Fax: (03) 9686 2197

Website: [www.ocei.vic.gov.au](http://www.ocei.vic.gov.au)

### **ACT Planning & Land Authority**

#### **Electrical Safety**

16 Challis Street **DICKSON ACT 2602**

Phone: (02) 6207 6400

Fax: (02) 6207 1640

Website: [www.actpla.act.gov.au](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au)

### **Department of Fair Trading New South Wales**

1 Fitzwilliam Street **PARRAMATTA NSW 2150**

Phone: (02) 9895 0715

Fax: (02) 9689 0423

Website: [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

### **Department of Industrial Relations Queensland**

#### **Electrical Safety Office**

75 William Street **BRISBANE QLD 4000**

Phone: (07) 3227 6251

Fax: (07) 3237 0229

Website: [www.eso.qld.gov.au](http://www.eso.qld.gov.au)

### **Department of Infrastructure, Planning & Environment Northern Territory**

38 Cavenagh Street **DARWIN NT 0800**

Phone: (08) 8999 8961

Fax: (08) 8999 8967

Website: [www.ipe.nt.gov.au](http://www.ipe.nt.gov.au)

### **Energy Safety Western Australia**

20 Southport Street **LEEDERVILLE WA 6007**

Phone: (08) 9422 5200

Fax: (08) 9422 5244

Website: [www.energysafety.wa.gov.au](http://www.energysafety.wa.gov.au)

### **Office of Electricity Standards & Safety Tasmania**

30 Gordon's Hill Road **ROSNY PARK TAS 7018**

Phone: (03) 6233 7831

Fax: (03) 6233 8338

Website: [www.wst.tas.gov.au/electricity](http://www.wst.tas.gov.au/electricity)

### **Office of the Technical Regulator South Australia**

#### **Energy Regulation**

Level 13 Wakefield House

30 Wakefield Street **ADELAIDE SA 5000**

Phone: (08) 8226 5500

Fax: (08) 8226 5866

Website: [www.technicalregulator.sa.gov.au](http://www.technicalregulator.sa.gov.au)