



Monday 24 October 2022

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
Locked Bag 100, East Perth WA 6892

Western Australia Engineers Registration Commerce Regulations Amendment (Building Services) Regulations 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Commerce Regulations Amendment (Building Services) Regulations 2022*. I am writing to convey the support of the Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH) for the scheme and proposed amendments.

AIRAH is a keen supporter of the Building Minister's Forum's (BMF) call for a nationally harmonised registration scheme for building practitioners, including engineers. This is in line with the Shergold-Weir *Building Confidence* report, which has as its primary aim to "restore community confidence in Australia's building and construction industry".

AIRAH is the only body solely focussed on representing Mechanical Engineer HVAC&R Building Services professionals, which has active membership committees in every state and territory in Australia, including the Western Australian.

The feedback provided here is in addition to that AIRAH has provided previously in December 2020 and August 2022.

There are four key areas that AIRAH wishes to comment further on.

1. Classes of and levels of registration

AIRAH is supportive of these levels and classes, noting that our specific sector is made up of contractors and practitioners in the mechanical services class, which encompasses engineers working in heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVAC&R) – building services.

HVAC&R – building services is a unique branch of engineering that combines skills from both mechanical and electrical engineering. Equally, HVAC systems incorporate passive smoke and fire control measures that fall into the area of fire safety engineering. For this reason, it is important that the scheme recognises the overlap of work and does not require contractors and practitioners in HVAC&R building services to undertake additional registration under the fire safety class. AIRAH would be happy to support the Department in defining scopes of work within fire safety that could be included under HVAC&R building services.

Additionally, we believe specific mention should be made of refrigeration engineers in the category guidelines. Refrigeration systems are often incorporated into buildings – for example, cold stores and supermarkets within mixed use commercial/residential premises. These systems include elements such as chillers and cooling towers, just like HVAC systems. In other jurisdictions, AIRAH has seen a need for

more clarity around whether this class of engineer requires registration. Their typical qualifications also need to be considered – see below.

2. Qualifications and experience

AIRAH supports the intent of this regulation to enable engineers' qualifications and experience to be accredited by approved industry organisations, in line with engineers' registration schemes in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

However, it is important that the scheme recognises the typical profile of engineers working in HVAC&R building services. Although some practitioners have an engineering degree, there is currently no dedicated HVAC&R – building services undergraduate engineering degree course offered by any Australian university. This need is largely met by AIRAH's accredited Professional Diploma in Building Services – HVAC&R. Nor does industry experience as a mechanical engineer guarantee experience with HVAC&R – building services systems. It is vital that those working on these systems have the appropriate skills and experience.

Because of a lack of engineering degrees that specifically deal with HVAC&R – building services – now and in the past – mechanical engineers working in this sector have over the years obtained widely differing tertiary qualifications. Many leading professionals in this sector – including some who provide input for the National Construction Code and chair Australian Standards committees – do not have a Washington Accord accredited qualification in mechanical engineering. AIRAH recommends that alternative pathways to registration are provided for these people.

On pages 125/126, the draft regulation notes:

For the purposes of section 17(1)(d), an application for registration as a building engineering practitioner must include certification from an assessment entity approved by the Building Commissioner that the applicant's qualifications and experience, considered together, are equivalent to, or exceed, the requirements in the Table to subregulation (1).

As Australia's peak body for HVAC&R – building services engineers, AIRAH will be applying to become an assessment entity in Western Australia and would seek for the ability to assess engineers for a set period and determine whether their qualifications and experience, considered together, are equivalent or exceed the requirements in the Table to the subregulation.

AIRAH believes that such "grandfathering" arrangements will be an important issue for many of the sector's most experienced practitioners.

3. Prescribed requirements: Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

AIRAH strongly supports a minimum CPD requirements for registered engineering practitioners.

CPD is vital for expanding practitioners' knowledge, maintaining up-to-date technical skills and progressing their careers.

AIRAH has launched a professional accreditation scheme specifically designed for engineers operating in HVAC&R – Building Services. The [AIRAH Professional Engineer Register](#) accredits professional engineers in the mechanical engineer HVAC&R – Building Services discipline.

The APER accreditation program has been designed to meet the engineer accreditation requirements in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, and will also support the schemes in other states.

Note that the APER accreditation is aligned with the proposed requirements: a minimum of 150 hours over three years.

4. Implementation

The implementation of engineers' registration scheme over a 4-year period makes good sense as it will give appropriate time for practitioners to become aware and familiar with the scheme and prepare the applications for assessment.

AIRAH hopes this will help benefit the implement and an ongoing assessment of the scheme and we look forward to being involved in the next steps and restoring community confidence in Australia's building and construction industry.

AIRAH looks forward to working with you in the future as the registration program is rolled out.

Regards,



Tony Gleeson, M.AIRAH
Chief Executive
AIRAH

About AIRAH

The Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH) is an independent, specialist, not-for-profit technical organisation providing leadership in the air conditioning, refrigeration and heating sector through collaboration, communication, engagement and professional development.

Formed in 1920, AIRAH has earned renown from government and other industry bodies for its expertise across a broad expanse of issues in the realm of engineering services for the built environment. AIRAH represents the entire breadth of the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVAC&R) industry, from "the man in the van" to research-focused academics; from plumbers to designers of the nation's most high-performing buildings; from sole operators to the chief executives of large corporations.

As Australia's leading refrigeration and air conditioning organisation, AIRAH represents a membership – and an industry – that is crucial to our community's comfort, health and safety.