



20 October 2022

Productivity Commission
Interim Report 6

By Online Lodgement

ETU Submission to the Productivity Commission – 5 Year Productivity Inquiry: A more productive labour market – Interim Report 6

The Electrical Trades Union of Australia ('the ETU') is a division of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union ('the CEPU').¹ The ETU is the principal union for electrical and electrotechnology tradespeople and apprentices in Australia, representing well over sixty-thousand workers around the country. The CEPU represents close to one hundred thousand workers nationally, making us amongst the largest trade unions in Australia.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the ETU acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

The ETU welcomes the opportunity to make this short submission in response to the Productivity Commission – 5 Year Productivity Inquiry: A more productive labour market – Interim Report 6.

Our Union is deeply concerned by the Report, which purports to provide analysis of productivity as it relates to electrical occupations. This analysis is proffered despite the Commission failing to engage with a single electrical worker or their Union, any electrical regulator, any electrical contractor, any relevant employer or industry association, or any of the currently authorised providers of offshore technical assessments for overseas electrical workers seeking to work in Australia. It is passing strange that the Commission, a body with no technical experience and no applicable industry engagement, believes itself in a position to comment on training requirements for skilled trades. The approach reeks of disdain for non-university educated occupations and speaks to a deep-seated institutional bias against working people.

The content of the Interim Report 6 that relates to electrical occupations is wrong and unfounded.

The one area relating to overseas workers that is a problem, is the former governments decision in 2020 to abolish Trades Recognition Services. This has eliminated a safe and efficient pathway for migrant workers who are already in Australia having their skills assessed quickly and accurately and has led to cases of migrant worker exploitation by opportunistic training providers.

¹ CEPU is a registered organisation under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* (Cth).



I note that the Productivity Commission did not identify this problem in its interim report.

Finally, I urge the Productivity Commission to abandon its purely desktop approach to industry consultation, such as it is, and before making comment on the workings of the electrical industry engage with real electrical workers and employers. Perhaps such an approach may lead to more productive analyses.